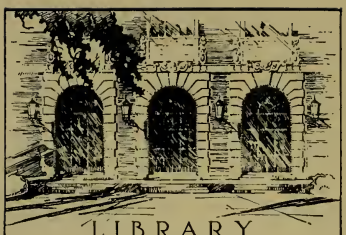

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PRIVATE LIFE;

OR,

VARIETIES OF CHARACTER AND OPINION.

In Two Volumes.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "GERALDINE," &c. &c.

Mary Jane Mackenzie

"All pages of human life are worth reading; the wise instruct, the gay divert us, the imprudent teach us what to shun, the absurd cure the spleen." MRS. MONTAGUE.

"There is much to be said on both sides, observed Mr. Equipoise."

VOL. I.

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PRIVATE LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

"Proteus did not take so many shapes to escape questions as vanity does to provoke admiration."

"If vanity does not overturn the virtues, it certainly makes them totter." ROCHEFOUCAULT.

"LES passions les plus vifs nous laissent quelque fois de relâche, mais la vanité nous agite toujours."

"Is not that axiom a libel upon human nature, my dear mother?" exclaimed Constance Grenville, indignantly throwing aside the book she was reading.

"Why there are cases," returned Mrs. Grenville, with a smile, "in which truth is considered a libel: perhaps this may be one of them."

"Truth! Oh, my dear mother, think it over

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once more.—'La vanité nous agite toujours'—*toujours*—only weigh that word."

"I acknowledge it to be a comprehensive one indeed," said Mrs. Grenville, "and it may require a little qualification; but Rochefoucault, at any rate, is so near the truth, that you must forgive me for not sympathising in your indignation."

"I do not envy him his knowledge of human nature, then," replied Constance with energy. "Rather let me for ever enjoy the bliss, or incur the disgrace of ignorance, than learn to refer every thought, word, action, and feeling to a motive so paltry, so little, so contemptible as vanity."

"But Rochefoucault speaks of it, not as a universal motive, but as a perpetual stimulus," observed Mrs. Grenville.

"I will not, I cannot believe in its universality," replied Constance. "I think, even in my short life, in my limited circle, I know many persons without an atom of vanity."

"Without an atom! No, no, my dear child; you know many persons whose vanity is in good order; you know some who have the policy to conceal, others who have the strength to

subdue it; but show me the man or woman without vanity, and I will show you the philosopher's stone."

"And do you make no exceptions?" asked Constance. "Do you not, for instance, believe with Dean Swift, that a man may be too proud to be vain; that vanity and pride are not only distinct, but incompatible?"

"Why, common report and metaphysicians tell us so," returned Mrs. Grenville; "but I have seen them so curiously blended in the same character, that I have little doubt of their connection and consanguinity."

"And you do not subscribe to the opinion, that one is the error of a great mind, the other of a little one?" continued Constance.

"I think vanity is apt to creep into minds of all dimensions," said Mrs. Grenville. "Recollect the inordinate and hungry vanity of Queen Elizabeth, and Cardinal Richlieu, the restless self-tormenting vanity of Rousseau, and I think you will not subscribe to the truth of the distinction. No, no; depend upon it, vanity and pride are branches from the same stem. The ramifications of vanity are perhaps more minute and endless; its forms more grotesque and

various; for where is it not to be found? It sparkles in the eye of beauty; it breaks from the lip of genius; it lurks under the stole of humility; it peeps from beneath the garment of sanctity: — we laugh at it in others, we veil it from ourselves; but it is either latent or apparent in every son and daughter of Adam. — There is this difference, I allow, — pride is openly acknowledged — vanity, secretly, often unconsciously cherished."

"Well, then, pride, since it seeks no concealment, is certainly less contemptible than vanity," observed Constance.

"Not less contemptible, but more presumptuous," said Mrs. Grenville.

"I was early taught," continued Constance, with some emotion, that a certain degree of pride was connected with the best feelings and qualities of the heart; with honour, candour, sincerity, independence of spirit. Pride never seeks to deceive — it cannot fawn, or crouch, or flatter: — at any rate, it is erect and lofty."

"It is easy to invest it with false splendour, my dear girl," returned Mrs. Grenville; "but pride, in a dependent creature, is ridiculous — in a Christian, preposterous. Those only to

whom neither of these designations belong can cherish it with consistency."

"But there is one species of pride," exclaimed Constance, after a pause, "which I may and must cherish: it is as essential in our passage through this world, as shield and buckler were to a soldier in days of yore."

"It would be safer, I think, to have recourse to humility," replied Mrs. Grenville. "The pilgrim with his scrip and staff was more secure amid the din of war, than the soldier with his glittering sword and battle-axe."

"Ah! but I have great and venerable authority on my side," continued Constance, eagerly: "with such a champion as Dr. Johnson — dear, excellent Dr. Johnson! — I may plead in behalf of *defensive* pride."

"I am not insensible to the authority of that great name, dear Constance," replied Mrs. Grenville; "but the quality that gives dignity to poverty, and which can awe presumption into deference, deserves a better name than *pride*."

"Allow me to retain the principle, and I will not quarrel about its name," said Constance.

"Take care, take care, my dear girl," said

Mrs. Grenville, "that it *is* the right principle you are fostering. Fallen spirits sometimes assume a form of light, and we cannot borrow Ithuriel's spear to detect the cheat."

"But I can borrow your experience, which will do almost as well," returned Constance; "so define this principle for me — tell me what it is, and what it is not."

"To begin with what it is *not*," said Mrs. Grenville, "it is not tenacity arming itself, like Quixote, to fight with shadows; it is not irritability, sensitive at every pore, and 'writhing upon a doubled rose leaf;' it is not inordinate self-estimation, requiring homage for imaginary claims."

"O stop, my dear mother!" exclaimed Constance, — "how I dread looking into my heart with your microscope! it discovers so much that I had rather not see. If I had the courage to use it often, I should be out of humour with myself for ever; so, as I am well acquainted with your taste for happy faces, I am resolved, in pity to you, not to borrow it."

"Consent to employ it, my beloved child," said Mrs. Grenville, tenderly; "the day may

come when it will be no longer within your reach."

"Ah! my dearest mother," exclaimed Constance, throwing her arms affectionately around her mother, "one grave look, one sigh of yours is worth a thousand homilies. Oh! if all the world resembled you, easy and delightful would be the duty of humility: you shall tell me this very minute, if you please, all my faults."

"All!" repeated Mrs. Grenville, taking out her watch, with a good-humoured smile, and holding it up to Constance; "we shall not have time to get through half before dinner; it wants but ten minutes to five, so run away to your dressing-room as fast as possible, and defer quarrelling either with yourself or Rochefoucault till after we have dined."

CHAP. II.

" Oh! bonheur — elle revient! le retour a des ailes;
" Quel plaisir de conter les souvenirs fidèles!

MAD. DE GENLIS.

MRS. Grenville did not belong to that large and respectable class of elderly ladies who love to prose, and lecture, and dogmatise. In the course of a long life, she had witnessed such waste of female fluency in this way, that she trusted more to the silent eloquence of example and to playful raillery as correctives in the management of her daughter. Occasionally, however, she ventured upon a short forcible appeal to her understanding and heart; and, perhaps, had they dined tête-à-tête, the chapter of faults might have been renewed at the hour of parlour-twilight, when the cloth disappeared, and it was " idlesse all;" but their party had been increased by the arrival of Caroline Lennox; and the faults of Constance were not a safe theme in her presence.

Circumstances had combined to foster an intimacy that bid fair to ripen into friendship between the young ladies; but if equality of mind be essential to its existence, there could be little in this case; for, in quickness of perception, and in firmness and vigour of intellect, Constance was strikingly superior to her companion.

Full of tenderness and humility, Caroline not only felt and acknowledged this superiority, but was extremely anxious to proclaim it to the whole world. She looked upon her young friend as a "bright and particular star," made to be worshipped and wondered at; and any attempt to controvert this notion produced so warm an opposition, and such reiterated assurances that *every body* coincided with her in opinion, that Mrs. Grenville took refuge in silence, and in an incredulous smile, which she hoped Constance would interpret judiciously.

Certain it is, that the day of Mrs. Grenville's arrival at the village of Elton was registered by Caroline as one of the brightest in her calendar. It had brought with it as great an accession of happiness as could spring from the union of novelty and variety, at an age when the mind is peculiarly alive to their charms.

Previous to this golden era, the life of Caroline had been uniform even to monotony. The visits of her brothers, Sir Henry and Percy, had thrown an occasional brightness over the scene; but the routine of a thorough English education had occupied much time: they had been transferred from Eton to Cambridge; and during the last three years had been travelling on the Continent.

Her mother, Lady Lennox, had been many years a widow. A fond and tender attachment to the memory of her husband combined with very delicate health to establish a decided preference for the quiet luxury of retirement; and this preference, fostered by indulgence, was now fast growing into a love of seclusion.

The social feelings have been not unaptly compared to a heap of embers, which, when separated, soon languish, darken, and expire; but, placed together, they glow with a ruddy and intense heat. The glow was fast fading with Lady Lennox. With increased reluctance she occasionally ordered her carriage, to pay the dull duties of civility to the few county families with whom she still maintained a languid intercourse, and returned, congratulating herself that the task was ended.

Nice, even to fastidiousness, in the choice of associates for her daughter, Caroline had nearly completed her twentieth year before any young person had been admitted to the privilege of intimacy at the Grange.

The clergyman's family, usually the standing resource in such situations, was unluckily not rich in auxiliaries on the present occasion. Mr. Mortimer, the rector, had no rosy laughing tribe of lads and lasses to multiply his joys or sorrows, to exercise his temper, or quicken his activity. He had been early left a widower, with an only son; and had hitherto successfully parried the attacks of sundry ladies of "no particular age," who had cherished the very natural hope, that he would quarrel with his solitary lot, and once more sigh, like the Oxford student, for "that prime bliss, a loving wife." The sigh, however, if breathed at all, was audible to no fair lady in the village of Elton; and the hope that the style and title of the rector's lady would be revived in their own persons became in process of time less vivid, though never absolutely extinct.

Lady Lennox visited but one or two families in the very limited circle of the village of Elton.

She was somewhat high and aristocratic; and had certain prejudices and preferences in favour of the "born gentlewoman," not to be easily subdued. She began, however, to feel that the seclusion in which Caroline lived was unfriendly to ease of manner and vivacity of mind; and she was meditating with some anxiety upon the difficulty of selecting a suitable companion for her daughter, when the following letter from her early friend, Mrs. Grenville, relieved her perplexity on the subject: —

"My dear friend,

"I know that the letter announcing my arrival in England will be a welcome visitor at your breakfast-table, and that the glow of pleasure it excites will not decrease, when I tell you, that I hope in a few weeks to be indulged with a seat there myself. Yes, I am once more in England — that country endeared to me as the land of my birth, and blended with all my fondest and earliest recollections; yet it is with melancholy feelings that I retread its shores. Twenty-four years have elapsed since I left them in the very morning of life, enjoying the freshness and glow of that 'hour of prime.' —

I return when its noon is hasting rapidly away. The scene around me is unchanged; but how vividly does memory restore the past! The image of my beloved husband, in all the brightness of youth, rises before me. I seem once more to look upon that beaming eye, that animated step, that cordial smile; for a moment a sense of loneliness, which the widowed heart alone can feel, presses upon my spirits.

"Ellen, too, that dear, dear sister—with how fond a hope did I once look forward to our meeting!—how often during our long separation had fancy busied herself in sketching a peaceful English home, which would be always gladdened by her presence! Alas! the fond dream was not to be realised.

"But I sorrow not as those without hope, and, in the cheerfulness of a Christian spirit, would far rather recount the mercies, than dwell upon the sorrows of my lot. I am grateful for its portion of sunshine, for the many happy hours that are inscribed on memory's page, and for the treasures I still possess in my dear children. Of Edward, indeed, I am apt to think with that trembling anxiety which mothers feel, when the world, with its enchantments and perils, seems

spread as a map before the mental eye; and the peculiar dangers and temptations of a soldier's life appear to me sometimes with the most vivid and painful distinctness. I cannot blame, though I may certainly regret, his choice of this profession. The banner and shield of his ancestors were among the first objects that met his infant gaze, and the record of their martial deeds was early poured into his delighted ear. I am not surprised that they should have kindled the determination, 'and I too will be a soldier;' but I should have preferred a more peaceful destination.

"Constance is recovering her health and spirits, and drawing plans for the future with all the industry of youthful hope. First, we are to choose a home. I do not for a moment hesitate as to the spot: it must be near yours. What a glow of feeling does this anticipation excite! Those surely are mistaken who maintain that as life advances the heart withers and grows dull and cold: my own feelings at this moment refute the cheerless notion.

"To choose the spot, however, is more easily done than to find a house that will suit at once our taste and circumstances. If we could fix

our tent and kindle a fire in the gipsy style, it would be easily settled. It is a pity that simple picturesque mode of living ever went out of fashion; it would save a world of trouble: but we, who are doomed to live in common-place brick and mortar, are not so easily accommodated. I cannot even simplify the matter by talking of a cottage, pretty as its casement windows and clustering roses may be; I must have good sized rooms, and windows that will admit every sunbeam that is to be found in this fickle climate. A garden, too, with plenty of sun and shade, where we may loiter in the summer, and warm ourselves in winter, and which we can fill with flowers, is quite indispensable. Constance and I are as fond of flowers as the bee and butterfly, and mean that our rich parterre of dahlias and pinks shall rival yours. To balance our extravagance as to house and garden, we must be content with a pony chair, and country lad, to serve in the triple capacity of butler, footman, and groom.

"I will not say forgive my egotism, but pray repay it in kind. I am longing to become acquainted with your sons and daughter, and to feel that they have something more than an

hereditary claim upon my heart. Caroline I have never seen, nor Sir Henry and Percy, since the days when their 'laughing eyes and laughing voices filled your halls with gladness.' I plead guilty to some womanly curiosity on this occasion; but this feeling is so blended with deep interest and strong favourable impressions, that it will hardly be a court of equity into which they are summoned.

"I can imagine that you think of my Constance with just such kind and softened feelings. Shall I sketch her portrait? I am half tempted; but it would be difficult for me to do her justice; I do not mean that flattering kind of justice usually comprehended in this phrase, but simple justice. To assist the development of a mind, when we have had little to do with its formation, is always a delicate task, and it is one which I perform with such intense interest, that it renders me keenly alive not only to all that is lovely and engaging, but to the minutest defect in the character of Constance.

"You know with what reluctance I gave up the personal superintendence of my dear child's education; but my long residence in an unhealthy climate rendered this imperative; and in

confiding her to the care of my beloved Ellen, half my anxieties were removed. I knew that she would watch over her precious charge with a tenderness the most vigilant and devoted. You have not forgotten the peculiar character of this loved and lamented sister; her high principle, intense feeling, and warm affections. She seems to have infused these high principles and to have transferred these warm affections to her charge, with a touch of the peculiarities and eccentricities by which she was characterised. But I will say no more; you shall look at her without any further assistance from my spectacles; and after conning over this book, so dear to me, with your own gentle but nicely-judging eyes, I must be indulged with the result.

In the hours of childhood we loved to share each other's sports; in the brilliant days of youth to talk over our mutual hopes and fears; and I am longing once more to take sweet counsel with you, and to prove that I am, as ever,

Your affectionate

H. Grenville.

Lady Lennox read this letter with an emo-

tion of vivid pleasure: it recalled the happiest period of her life, and awakened a thousand interesting recollections. Playmates in childhood, and friends in youth, these ladies had lived on terms of the closest intimacy, till a few years after the marriage of Mrs. Grenville, when her husband accepted an appointment in India. The intimate sympathy fostered by personal intercourse was thus suspended; but a constant correspondence had been maintained, and the silver link of friendship had lost nothing of its brightness or stability.

Colonel Grenville remained on his station in India till symptoms of a pulmonary complaint warned him to seek the more genial climate of Italy. The malady, however, was not to be arrested. After two years passed in those alternations of hope and fear excited by the harassing fluctuations of a hectic disorder, Colonel Grenville died. More than a year had now elapsed since that melancholy event. Constance, who had joined her parents in Italy, mourned over her father with an intensity of feeling which belonged to her character and temperament. The scenes where, during the slow progress of decay, he had loved to linger,

the books which had soothed his hours of pain and languor, the couch by which she had so often watched, seemed to her objects of dear and solemn interest; and she shrunk from a return to the common pursuits of daily life as a profanation of her father's memory. Expressions of condolence appeared to her intrusive, and civil enquiries officious: the visits of intimates or strangers were alike unwelcome; and she felt surprised that the deep, quiet, and more chastised grief of her mother allowed any recollection of their claims.

Three months passed away, and her feelings became somewhat quieter; but still any allusion to Colonel Grenville, or the mention of his name, produced a gush of sorrow amounting to anguish. Mrs. Grenville thought it best to try new scenes, and, instead of returning immediately to England, travelled slowly through Italy, visiting all that was most interesting in that classic and lovely land. This plan produced its natural effect, in gradually restoring the spirits of Constance to their usual tone; and she was now longing to enjoy with Mrs. Grenville the thousand nameless pleasures which are to be tasted only in a settled home.

The prospect of again seeing her friend acted upon Lady Lennox as a cordial and stimulus; and sitting down to her desk, with an exhilaration of feeling to which she had been long a stranger, she despatched the following letter.

To Mrs. Grenville.

Your letter, my dear friend — that welcome letter, which recalls the happiest periods of my life, could not have arrived at a more fortunate moment. But I have no time to dwell upon the feelings it has kindled — the remembrances mournful and sweet which it has awakened — I have only time to say, that you must not talk of a few weeks. I shall be impatient if you permit even a few days to pass away before you gratify me by a visit. A great deal of positive selfishness mingles with this impatience. Do you remember that house in our village so long occupied by Major Hamilton? It is now to be let. Recollect its eligibilities: it combines the two indispensables; large rooms, and a garden which you will make a little paradise; and it is within a quarter of a mile of the park-gate. Pray come directly; for several persons, with

busy, calculating, admiring faces, have been inspecting the house; and it will soon begin to look so tempting in all its spring beauty, that not a moment is to be lost. Come, then, my dear friend, let not the delightful hope you have excited be but a castle in the air. The idea of reunion, of daily intercourse with you, throws so rich a gleam over the fast coming evening of my life, that to see it fade and die away, would occasion me the keenest disappointment. You will find me very different from the lively, light-hearted being you once remember. I am sickly and faded, passing half the year in my dressing-room; and obliged during the other half to consult the thermometer before I venture to breathe the air of heaven. But I cannot bring myself to seek health in a more genial climate. My heart clings so fondly to the home of its happiest years, that it would break, I think, if transplanted even to the loveliest country on earth. Indeed, this love of home has insensibly increased upon me till I love very little else. To me, general society has long been inexpressibly irksome; but in proportion to the indifference with which I contemplate the world of strangers, is the intensity of

that concentrated feeling which spends itself on a few dear objects. Come, then, and add to the domestic pleasures I am already anticipating. My sons will shortly return to England. Sir Henry, my pride, pet, and paragon, as in one of your letters you once saucily called him, will now be resident at the Manor-house, and Percy will be as much there as law and London will permit. I may venture to say, that to all, yourself and Constance will be most welcome:— to my daughter she will be invaluable. Caroline was sighing for a companion, and I was seeking one for her; and this very morning had been considering the subject with some anxiety, when your letter happily settled the point. Constance is well born, well bred, and daughter to Mrs. Grenville. What more can be desired? The last clause alone is worth a million of common-place qualifications.

My pen is running a race with time; but he gains upon me so rapidly, that I can only beg you will let me hear as soon as possible that the day is fixed, when I may once more welcome my dear and earliest friend to the home of her affectionate

JANE LENNOX.

Ten days after the exchange of these letters Mrs. Grenville and Constance were visiting Lady Lennox. The house had been examined, admired, and secured; and during the requisite preparations for its occupation, which employed nearly two months, its intended inmates remained with their friends.

Daily intercourse under the same roof quickly ripened acquaintanceship into intimacy, and intimacy into affection, with the young ladies; and so much pleasure had Lady Lennox derived from talking over the past with her early friend, that a removal even to the neighbouring village was not contemplated without regret. Various arts of kindness were employed to prolong the visit; but at length the day arrived when stratagem and sophistry failed; when it could no longer be concealed that every room was aired, and every walk swept; that the grass was mown, the flowers tied up, the books arranged, and Mrs. Grenville was reluctantly permitted to take possession of her new dwelling.

The change, however, produced little cessation of intercourse; for rarely did a day pass without a meeting between the families. There were airings to be taken, rambles to be enjoyed, duets

to be practised, a new book to be criticised, or a new bonnet to be admired.

Amidst all this felicity Caroline had still something to sigh for: she longed to introduce her brothers to Constance; to feel her own warm admiration shared, her own high opinion of her friend confirmed by their judgment; and she had grumbled both secretly and audibly at their protracted absence. With a light heart, therefore, she tripped to the village to announce the important news, that Sir Henry and his brother would arrive at the Manor House the following evening.

Constance was perhaps more indifferent to this circumstance than most young ladies resident in a country village would have been; and she received the intelligence with a quiet hope that Lady Lennox would not be disappointed. In the course of the evening, however, she detected herself in wondering whether they were handsome or plain, grave or gay, talkative or taciturn; whether they had a taste for poetry, painting, and music, — for the lovely in nature and the grand in art; whether they were men of wit, men of learning, men of taste, or men of the world; and before her won-

dering fit was over, she had tolerably well ascertained what she desired to find them; and she had concluded, that if they were the "marvellous proper men" she wished them to be, their society would add materially to the pleasures of Elton.

CHAP. III.

" Vous avez, sans contredit,
Tous deux beaucoup d'esprit —
Voilà la ressemblance.

L'un va comme le vent,
L'autre pense auparavant —
Voilà la différence."

" SHALL I be quite unpardonable, Percy, if I remind you that the carriage has been at the door half an hour, and that we have eighty miles to travel to-day?" said Sir Henry Lennox, holding up his watch.

" In a moment, in one moment ! " exclaimed Percy, still lingering amidst a group of ladies by whom he was encircled.

But one moment, and another, and another passed away, and did not appear to render the parting less difficult. Blushing cheeks, and glistening eyes, and " smiles that might as well be tears," would have been discoverable to curious eyes: Sir Henry's might possibly be of

this description; for after one more look at his watch, with a good-humoured smile and bow, he put an end to this "sweet sorrow," took his brother's reluctant arm, and led him away to the carriage. It drove rapidly off, and after a minute's silence, Percy eagerly exclaimed,

"Well, what do you think of them? Did I not paint to the very life?"

"They are agreeable, very agreeable altogether," returned Sir Henry.

"Agreeable!" repeated Percy. "Lives there a man with soul so dead?" Is it possible that, after passing three days with such a family as the Seymours, you should finish by pronouncing them to be *agreeable*, *altogether agreeable?* You might as well say that Shakspeare was altogether an author of *some* merit."

"Had I passed three weeks, instead of three days with them," observed Sir Henry, "I might perhaps have discovered that they had every virtue under Heaven; "but three days—"

"Three days!" interrupted Percy—"three minutes are sufficient to prove, that they are of the 'porcelain clay of human nature,'—such taste, such refinement, so much heart!"

"Ah! my dear fellow, it is all over with you I see," exclaimed Sir Henry.

> "That eye, in liquid lustre moving,
> "That cheek, abash'd at man's approving,"

have done your business."

"Heaven forbid!" exclaimed Percy. "What can a poor briefless barrister, a younger brother like myself, have to do with love?"

"Oh! as to that, I have always remarked, that briefless barristers and younger brothers are favourite marks for Cupid. I fancy they are peculiarly vulnerable. Now he whose luckless or lucky star has made him of 'broad lands the heir' stands on the defensive; suspicion provides him with a sevenfold shield; he can never feel quite certain whether he is loved for himself or for his estate."

"Encourage this fastidiousness by all means, my dear fellow," returned Percy, laughing, "and perhaps the land of my forefathers, with all its appurtenances and appendages, may one day be mine. I hope you will be quite as particular as the Baron of Triermain. Do you remember his modest list of conjugal requisites?"

' Where is the maiden of mortal strain
That may match with the Baron of Triermain ?
She must be lovely, and constant, and kind,
Holy and pure, and humble of mind;
Blithe of cheer, and gentle of mood,
Courteous, and generous, and noble of blood;
Lovely as the sun's first ray,
When it breaks the clouds of an April day;
Constant and true as the widow'd dove;
Kind as a minstrel that sings of love;
Pure as the fountain in rocky cave,
Where never sunbeam kiss'd the wave;
Humble as maiden that loves in vain;
Holy as hermit's vesper strain;
Gentle as breeze that but whispers and dies,
Yet blithe as the light leaves that dance in its sighs;
Courteous as monarch the morn he is crown'd,
Generous as spring dews that bless the glad ground;
Noble her blood as the currents that met
In the veins of the noblest Plantagenet:
Such must her form be, her mood, and her strain,
That shall match with Sir Roland of Triermain.' "

" I am far more humble in my expectations," observed Sir Henry. " I require only a union of two qualities, — simplicity of heart, and refinement of mind."

" Charming ! charming ! " exclaimed Percy: " my hopes mount rapidly; for what two words can be more deliciously comprehensive? But off with your mask of humility; confess that your simplicity comprises every grace under heaven;

your refinement, all that is rare, exquisite, and enchanting."

"No, no; you are mistaken," replied Sir Henry; "I am not coxcomb enough to be thus exigeant: but limited, and reasonable, and modest as my expectations are, I despair of realising them."

"Hear him, ye gods!" exclaimed Percy: "this gifted being, with a clear unincumbered estate of ten thousand a year, despairs of meeting with a wife!"

"Despair of meeting with a wife!" echoed Sir Henry. "No, no; I believe I might have had three times as many as Mustapha Ali Khan by this time. I am sure I have been talked at, and danced at, and sung at by very charming young ladies, and dined at by their mammas with a perseverance the most unwearied."

"Yes, yes," exclaimed Percy; "many a fête where Hebe would have been eclipsed; many a dinner upon which Vitellius would have banqueted, have been wasted upon you, ungrateful wretch that you are!"

"Oh, the attacks that my poor heart has sustained!" continued Sir Henry; "the blaze of beauty, the beams of wit, the sighs of tenderness, the downcast looks of love."

" And that heart, that adamantine heart escaped!" said Percy. " What miracle preserved it?"

" My humility," returned Sir Henry.

" Say rather your vanity," replied Percy, — " the vanity of a delicate and fastidious spirit, refining away human happiness, in dissatisfaction that it is not divine. Why should the roses of earth, with all their beauty and fragrance, be left to wither on the stalk, because they are not bright and unfading like those of Eden?"

" It is safest to admire them and pass on," said Sir Henry. " If we court a nearer acquaintance, we are either wounded by their thorns, or we discover some canker-worm in their folds, or we scatter their leaves too rudely."

" You were born at least three centuries too late, Harry," exclaimed his brother. " In the days of monks and martyrs, you might have gained immortal glory by that self-denying, self-tormenting spirit of yours: you might have rivalled St. Simon on his pillar, or St. Anthony in his cell; but you are out of date, my good fellow, quite out of date in this dear luxurious age. Why not adopt my maxim, 'To enjoy is to obey?'"

" My taste for enjoyment is probably quite as keen as your own," replied Sir Henry; " but we differ as to the means and modes. I confess I cannot find happiness in singing, and flirting, and quadrilling it for ever."

" No," said Percy; " you prefer walking through the world in a dignified, melancholy, gentleman-like style. You remind me of Froissart's description of the English at the meeting of the Black Prince with the French king. — ' Ils se rejouissaient tristement, selon la coutume de leur pays.' I fully believe Queen Mab was busy in our infancy, and cheated me of my heirship. Oh ! if I were Sir Henry Lennox, with his ten thousand per annum !"

" And if you were Sir Henry Lennox, with his ten thousand per annum ?"

" In ten minutes I would be at Helen's feet. She is a most enchanting creature : — her mischievous namesake was not more resistless ! She is so unconsciously beautiful ! — so deliciously sportive ! Her laughing eyes and bright smiles are sunshine to the heart."

Sir Henry smiled. " And you would not venture to bow at her shrine without the sumptuous offering of ten thousand per annum ?"

"Oh! it would be dust in the balance with her," replied Percy. "Aboulcasem's tree of gems would not bribe her for an instant; but I should like to endow her with an empire if possible — she may be won — she never can be bought, for disinterestedness is a family virtue with the Seymours; they value talents, indeed, but not of silver and gold."

"Yes, they attach rather an excessive value to talent, I think," said Sir Henry. "For a man of family, Seymour is strangely indiscriminate in his admission of guests; talent, of any description, is passport enough with him. I believe he would ask a mountebank to his table if he thought him pre-eminent in his way; and, to confess the truth, my aristocratic feelings and habits were somewhat shocked at that dinner-party of his."

"But was it not delightfully entertaining, worth all the dull dignity in the world? I saw the stately politeness with which you seated yourself — the dignified courtesy with which you prepared to listen to your plebeian neighbour. I knew him to be 'a fellow of infinite jest;' and Oh! how I triumphed when the corners of your scornful mouth relaxed into a

smile, till at length you were reduced to the vulgar level, and actually laughed aloud."

"Yes, he was irresistible — completely irresistible," exclaimed Sir Henry; "but it does not lessen my conviction, that it is contrary to the fitness of things for the Brahmin and the Paria to come into close contact."

"You must acknowledge," said Percy, "that Seymour's house is a most inspiring region."

"It had rather a contrary effect upon me," returned Sir Henry. "I felt guilty of not being a man of genius, and in so brilliant a circle, I could hardly forgive myself for such delinquency."

"To be sure you were sometimes provokingly silent," said Percy; "you made us dive deeply for your thoughts; but we contrived, by dint of great labour, to fish out a pearl now and then."

"Intimacy, or familiar intercourse with this circle, might dissolve the spell which seems to enchain my faculties," said Sir Henry; "but it was like breathing air too richly perfumed; and you know, 'Il n'est guère plaisant d'être empoisonnée même par l'esprit de rose.'"

"You are an enigma, Harry, — a most provoking enigma," exclaimed Percy.

"Not worth finding out," returned his brother; "so pass me over quietly."

"No, no, that I deny — that I will not subscribe to. You are amazingly well worth studying. Contrasts and contraries mingle in such bright confusion, harmonies and discords are so mysteriously blended in your composition, that you are worth a million of common-place characters."

"You are drawing your own portrait, not mine," said Sir Henry. "I have neither the variety nor the brilliancy you have endowed me with; but I hope my conduct will at least be consistent."

"That is a convenient word in the vocabulary of mock humility," observed Percy; "it has a modest unpretending sound, but it includes — what does it not include?"

"Nothing impossible or impracticable, I should imagine; but of course more than you give me credit for," replied Sir Henry, in a tone of slight pique.

Percy made no reply; he was seized with a sudden apprehension that they should not reach

the manor-house before midnight, and ordered the drivers to quicken their pace.

"I have really an indescribable longing to see that dear place again," said he, as he settled himself once more in the corner of the carriage. "I love every old stone in the building, every old mossy oak in the woods; every dell and dingle is fairy land to me. I do not think there is the least extravagance in the poet's description of the 'dear delicious thrill' that is felt on approaching the paternal home. Besides all this," continued he, after a short pause, "I am amazingly curious to see this Constance. Caroline is quite rapturous about her."

"I am seldom much influenced by young ladies' raptures," returned Sir Henry, dryly. "Young ladies and lovers are often afflicted with ecstasies peculiar to themselves."

"Yes, but my mother, who is neither a young lady nor a lover, speaks in high terms of Constance; and pray why should you have any prejudice against her? She may be an angel for aught you know."

"I have not the slightest prejudice about the matter," replied Sir Henry; "but I have heard of so many of these angels, who, upon nearer

acquaintance, proved mere common-place mortals, that I begin to question their existence."

"Well, a few hours will decide the point," exclaimed Percy.

"A few hours may enable you to pronounce a woman to be an angel," replied Sir Henry; "but I rather think it will take me a few weeks, or, perhaps, a few months to arrive at the same conclusion."

Percy laughed, and Sir Henry, drawing a book from his pocket, was soon absorbed in its contents."

CHAP. IV.

" The stately homes of England,
How beautiful they stand,
Amidst their tall ancestral trees,
O'er all the pleasant land!
The deer across their greensward bound,
Through shade and sunny gleam;
And the swan glides past them with the sound
Of some rejoicing stream."

MRS. HEMANS.

SIR HENRY did not talk like Percy of the glow that is felt upon a return to the paternal home. Unless his intellectual sensibilities were peculiarly excited, he was little in the habit of expressing his feelings, still less of describing his emotions. There was something extremely winning in the frank nature, and uncontrolled energy of Percy; but his vivid feelings were somewhat evanescent. Those of the young Baronet were of a more quiet, delicate character; and perhaps that delicious feeling which

consecrates home, which renders it "a dearer, sweeter spot than all the rest," was never more thoroughly experienced than by Sir Henry. This arose partly from the magical effect of those early associations which so endear the rural home of infancy and youth; but something of the pride of ancestry, and a sense of consequence, also blended with this feeling.

The family of Sir Henry was ancient and honourable, and as connoisseurs prefer a Queen-Anne's farthing to a brilliant guinea fresh from the mint, so Sir Henry would have thought a new-created earldom a poor exchange for the simple title which his ancestors had so long borne; nor would he have bartered the spacious and irregular manor-house, venerable with the tints of time, for the airy lightness, and commodious elegance of modern architecture.

During his absence from England, he had passed many a rapturous hour amidst the magnificent scenes of nature, and the glorious works of art; but in society, though he had mingled with the gay, the lovely, and the learned, he had felt but one of the crowd. Now

he listened with a complacent feeling to the joyous peal ringing out from the village church in honour of his arrival. He was glad to escape from the cold formalities and negative civilities of general intercourse, to faces that had been familiar to him from his boyish days. As he traversed each well-known path, the peasants paused from their labour, to bid him welcome home. The children suspended for a few minutes their noisy sports upon the green, to catch a peep at the young squire. The matrons clustered round some cottage door, and pronounced him to be the very picture of his father, the glories of whose wedding-day had not yet faded from their minds. They were glad Sir Henry had not brought home a lady from foreign parts — but a wife, no doubt, he would soon have. Nothing could be more easy than to choose one, in the opinions of these simple villagers — nothing could be more difficult in that of the fastidious Sir Henry.

This conviction did not lessen as he wandered through the beautiful glades, where oaks, the growth of centuries, stood in venerable magnificence. His unimpaired fortune, his unstained

name, seemed barriers to the accomplishment of this desirable object — the eligibilities were so obvious, so tempting, that he felt doubtful of being loved for himself alone.

It was true, that many a fair scion of a noble house might be found to smile upon him; but to be accepted as a mere appendage to his ancient demesne and ample fortune was not to be borne. And yet, were they not auxiliaries suspiciously powerful? In the middle rank of life, too, the value of adventitious distinction was equally well understood; and as to playing the part of the prince in disguise, and taking a rustic maid from her dairy and spinning-wheel, it was too hazardous an experiment. No; his wife must possess not only refined tastes, but refined habits; not only the capability of polish, but its actual gloss and brilliancy; the nameless elegancies, the thousand niceties of habit and feeling peculiar to the high-bred and well-bred, must be united with the simple disinterestedness of the village-maid, who, with a smile on her cheek, welcomes hard fare, and hard toil, "all for love."

Forms of grace and faces of beauty had

indeed crossed him in the path of life, and for a moment arrested his attention; but he had certain romantic, chivalrous notions on the subject of love and marriage; and the common every-day sort of wooing and winning to be effected in a modern drawing-room, had no charms for him. He had been born, as Percy declared, a few centuries too late.

Those were charming days, when lances might be shivered, and pilgrimages made, for the lady of your love; but, alas! Cupid and knight-errantry had nothing in common in these matter-of-fact days. Poets indeed sung sweetly of domestic joys, of "thought meeting thought," &c.; but theirs were lovely dreams. Marriage, now, was an affair of sordid barter and paltry calculation. Why then should he think of it? He could not conclude, with the melancholy casuist, that if "marriage had many pains, celibacy had no pleasures." Its pleasures were not indeed tender, pure, delicious, awakening the kindliest feelings, purifying and expanding the sensibilities of the heart; they were of a more excursive and superficial character. Still they were pleasures; perfect liberty

and independence were good things in their way. Such was his conclusion, as at the close of a long ramble the day after his arrival he re-entered the house, summoned his steward and bailiff, and passed the morning in talking of leases and fines, cattle and crops, old tenants and new; in looking over plans, and projecting improvements.

CHAP. V.

"An absolute gentleman, full of most excellent differences." SHAKSPEARE.

A FEW days elapsed before Sir Henry paid his respects at the Priory. In that space of time Percy had become half domesticated there. He had walked thither with Caroline, the very morning after his arrival — held two skeins of silk for Constance — decided between the nicely-balanced merits of crimson and scarlet, for the purse she was about to net — watered her favourite plants — sketched plans for new flower-beds on the lawn, and in a few days contrived to glide into an intimacy with a facility peculiar to himself.

During the same period, Constance had been making up her mind to dislike Sir Henry. By all she could learn or hear, and still more by all she could guess, he must be a vastly cold,

repulsive, self-important personage; with pride enough for all the "Montagues and Capulets" put together. And then not to wish to see Mrs. Grenville — dear delightful Mrs. Grenville! his mother's old friend — it was so heartless. Altogether she had not the least doubt that she should dislike him exceedingly.

At length Sir Henry came; and though he had not the winning ease and vivacity of Percy, yet his manners were too thoroughly polished, too graceful and gentlemanly to be quarrelled with. His high-bred courtesy was as distinct as possible from supercilious assumption, and there was a touch of affectionate deference in his manner to Mrs. Grenville, which Constance acknowledged to be in the very best taste. It was impossible to look at, and listen to him, without immediately understanding what Burke meant, when he talked of the Corinthian capital of polished society. But amidst the admiration which justice extorted, Constance felt a secret conviction, that Sir Henry had a very lively and sufficient sense of his own value. She was therefore inclined to wrap the mantle of reserve which she occasionally wore rather more closely round her; and thus her manner to Sir Henry

was cold and distant, while with Percy it was all playfulness, ease, and cordiality.

In spite of this repulsive feeling, she found however, that a certain degree of intimacy was not to be avoided. The most constant and friendly intercourse subsisted between the families, and occasions for meeting were perpetually recurring. One now offered, in a visit from her Ladyship's brother, Mr. Herbert. This gentleman, besides the circumstance of old acquaintanceship, which is a bribe in itself, had some peculiar claims upon Mrs. Grenville's kind recollections. He was fifteen years older than Lady Lennox, and the protecting fondness with which, during her girlish days, he petted his only sister, was in some degree extended to her favourite friend. He had been their unfailing resource in all the little griefs and difficulties of childhood; and many a scheme of youthful enjoyment, many a scene which now looked sunny and pleasant through the vista of years, they had enjoyed by his kind agency.

Mr. Herbert had passed through life with all the enjoyment and respectability to be derived from the combined advantages of a good understanding, a good temper, and a good estate.—

That he had not married, furnished an inexhaustible source of wonder to the world at large, and his friends in particular. During the summer of his days, indeed, the sagacious of his acquaintance had again and again settled preliminaries — the lady and the day had been decided upon. Mr. Herbert appeared to be the only person who had not taken the subject into consideration; for in spite of prophetic whispers, and plausible conjectures, he was still — what somebody has pronounced to be, next to a fine woman, the most charming being upon earth — an old bachelor. He had not, however, permitted life to rust away in idleness. Activity seemed the essence of his bodily and mental nature — he slept little, rode much, read much, and talked more. In fact, to talk was as essential to his happiness, as the air he breathed was to his existence; and to keep up what he termed the spirit of conversation, he generally contrived to pronounce that animated *No*, which was "to brush its surface and to make it flow." Without an atom of the caustic or the cynical in his nature, he usually controverted the opinions offered, merely for the sake of that conflict of mind which he peculiarly enjoyed.

He contemplated the world in general with very benevolent feelings; taciturnity was, with him, the unpardonable sin; he looked upon a silent man with the same sort of contempt that he did upon a counterfeit guinea; it had indeed the image and superscription, but what was it good for? If, however, there was one division of the silent class which he held in more absolute contempt than any other, it was that which includes those learned Thebans, those very clever persons, who seldom hazard an observation in general society; who make the fulness of their minds an excuse for the paucity of their communications, and the depth and extent of their learning a reason for never saying a word worth hearing. The silence of stupidity was wearisome, the silence of pretension insufferable.

To be abstracted or dull, however, in Mr. Herbert's company was not very easy. His cheerful tones and lively questions generally stimulated the most sluggish intellect. Mrs. Grenville found him little changed by years; time had touched him with a gentle hand; the dark hair had indeed become grey, and a slight tendency to baldness was discoverable on the open

forehead; but the same keen, bright, lively glance met hers; the same health and vigour were apparent in every tone and movement. He drew Constance to the window, to stroke back her clustering curls, and decide whom she was like, and dismissed her from the examination, with a kiss and a smile of cordial approbation; then took a chair by Mrs. Grenville, and talked over past times with that thorough interest and enjoyment which is inspired by such a theme.

"Yes, yes," said he, as Sir Henry and Percy entered the room, and approached to join them, "those were pleasant days, my dear Mrs. Grenville; there was a light-heartedness, a glee, a buoyancy about the girls and boys of that generation, which seems now to have faded away; people refine and luxuriate away their happiness and health, with strange ingenuity now-a-days."

"Why, upon the whole, it is a dull kind of world that we live in," said Sir Henry. "What could be more flat, Percy, than our dinner-party yesterday? Considering that no two minds precisely resemble each other, it is really wonder-

ful that so little novelty or variety is to be met with in general society."

"Why, you did not expect much of either at Monckton's, the very prince of humdrums," said Percy. "If it were not for his cook, his champagne, and his coronet, who in this wide world would trouble themselves to visit him?"

"The influence of a humdrum at the head of a table is indeed felt at the extremest verge," exclaimed Sir Henry. "The touch of a torpedo is not more paralysing."

"I am afraid that you are somewhat inordinate in your expectations," observed Mr. Herbert. "Surely one pleasure at a time ought to suffice."

"Yes; but can the mere gratification of the palate be called a pleasure?" enquired Sir Henry.

"It has been considered so by men with whom it would be somewhat rash and humiliating to measure minds," returned Mr. Herbert.

"If the infirmities of great minds are to be established into precedents," replied Sir Henry, "what folly or vice would not be sanctioned?"

"Folly or vice!" echoed Mr. Herbert. "You

do not class a keen relish for a good dinner, I hope, under such names?"

"Why, this very keen relish," replied Sir Henry, "savours strongly of gluttony or epicurism, both of which I hold in equal abhorrence."

"Then you confound two things essentially distinct," returned Mr. Herbert. "The one is a science, the other a mere animal excess."

"Yes; the one is contemptible, the other disgusting," rejoined Sir Henry.

"Gluttony," continued Mr. Herbert, "is the vice of savages, or of men of coarse minds, not very far removed from the savage state; now epicurism is to be found only amid the refinement of a highly-cultivated and civilised period, and it is consistent with a polished, and even a fastidious taste."

"Rather say," returned Sir Henry, "that it marks the decline and fall of refinement; that it is consistent with the selfishness which luxury generates and fosters."

"Pardon me," said Mr. Herbert; "the fastidiousness that is satisfied with nothing short of excellence is not to be despised."

"Excellence! as displayed in ragoûts and sauce piquante, in les mets and les entremets,"

exclaimed Sir Henry, contemptuously, "Oh! it is worth attaining! — Somebody says, and says rightly, that in this, as in many instances, the extremes of barbarism and civilisation meet. Gluttony is selfish and sensual; and epicurism not a whit less so. It was after the teachers of philosophy had been banished from Rome, that Apicius enlightened the world with his economical cookery-book; and poisoned himself because a hundred thousand pounds, the *poor* residue of his fortune, would not keep him from starving. Then the meeting merely to eat and drink; the putting the mind quietly to sleep"—

Sir Henry was interrupted by the entrance of a servant announcing that dinner was on the table.

"Lead on, if you please," said Mr. Herbert to his nephew. "After a ride of forty miles, such tidings are not to be heard with indifference."

Dinner, when Mr. Herbert was present, was always a merry meal. No dull pauses, no solemn, silent contemplation of the economy of the table were to be dreaded; and the gay tone and lively flow of conversation proved, at least, the possibility of eating and drinking without putting the mind to sleep.

CHAP. VI.

" Thou hast a charmed cup, Oh! Fame,
A draught that mantles high,
And seems to lift this earthly frame
Above mortality.

" Thou hast green laurel leaves that twine
Into so proud a wreath;
For that resplendent gift of thine
Heroes have smiled in death."

MRS. HEMANS.

" She was a voice alone,
And dwelt upon the noisy tongues of men;
But, Oh! this voice was sweet to mortal ears,
And touched so pleasantly the strings of pride
And vanity, which, in the heart of man,
Were ever strung harmonious to her note,
That many thought to live without her song
Was rather death than life."

POLLOK.

" You do not appear at all fatigued with your long ride," said Mrs. Grenville, addressing Mr. Herbert as he joined the ladies in the drawing-room.

"Fatigued! not the least in the world," returned he. "It is indolence and inaction that produce fatigue; enjoyment is abridged; life itself is abridged by their fatal influence. 'Pray, of what did your brother die?' said the Marquis of Spinola to Sir Horace Vere. 'He died, Sir,' replied Vere, 'of having nothing to do;' and depend upon it, his was not a solitary case. People in general are satisfied with far too little either of mental or bodily exercise. Our women crowd over the fire, or languish on a sofa three-fourths of the day, and then wonder that they have neither vigour of body nor equability of spirits; and men allow their minds to remain in just as sluggish a state. They are content to bring out a certain portion of talent on any specific occasion; but they do not keep the intellect in constant play and exercise. It is surprising how small a quantity is expended on home consumption."

"The gentlemen attempted no vindication; but the ladies were roused to self-defence by this accusation which they indignantly repelled. What could be more unfounded? One pleaded her love of walking, another her love of riding, another her passion for gardening. They dis-

claimed the accusation personally; they disclaimed it for the sex in general; and at length it was affirmed, that women, upon the whole, possessed more unwearied energy, and were capable of more disinterested exertion, than men.

The bow of acquiescence with which Mr. Herbert listened was contradicted by a smile of provoking incredulity; and when pressed on the subject by his fair antagonists, he acknowledged, that doubtless there might be some honourable exceptions, but the experience of a long life had failed to convince him that the active and energetic out-voted the listless and loungers.

" Compare," said he, " what has been done by some women, with what is done by the majority, and it will be seen whether or no they act up to the capabilities of their nature. I have just been running over the memoirs of Madame de Genlis, and I am quite delighted with the energy she displayed from eighteen to eighty."

There was a general buzz round the circle; and, " such egotism ! " " such vanity ! " " such frivolity ! " were to be heard in every quarter.

" I can easily pardon the vanity," said Mr. Herbert; " it is quite harmless, and very amusing; and as to egotism, it is the business of autobiography. I am not going to decide upon the merits of her political or moral character. All I contend for is, that there was no waste of life and its powers; she made the most of them, both in the way of enjoyment and usefulness; she did not permit either intellectual or animal life to stagnate; there was no dulness, no dozing, no torpor. Action — action — activity, is the royal quality in man."

" I owe too many pleasant hours to Madame de Genlis," observed Mrs. Grenville, " not to think of her with kindly feelings; but her vanity is preposterous, grotesque. We can scarcely feel contempt for Madame de Genlis; but in a less-gifted person, it would be both ludicrous and contemptible."

" And pray," said Mr. Herbert, " why should a passion which is at once a spring of usefulness and a source of happiness be termed contemptible?"

" I deny your premises," replied Mrs. Grenville, laughing.

" Half the world," continued Mr. Herbert,

" half the world at least is made up of weak characters, incapable of great conceptions or noble motives. It is to vanity that we are indebted for any good they may do; any virtue they may exercise. It quickens the indolent to something like energy and exertion. ' Put a stick to a piece of pointed iron, it becomes a dart; add a few feathers, it becomes an arrow.' It keeps the selfish in order, and stimulates them to endeavour to please and conciliate others; and thus their own feelings are now and then kept in the back ground; they flatter themselves that they are successful; this puts them in good humour, so at any rate something is gained. Vanity has been called, not unaptly, ' the chain of roses of mixed society.' "

" I will not allow it any such credit," said Mrs. Grenville. " If it occasionally lends a little suavity to the manners, and dresses the face in smiles, it more frequently conjures up the demons of malice and envy. The good it does is trifling, and doubtful, and might be much more effectually secured by a better principle. The mischief it works is great and certain: luxury may ruin thousands, but vanity her tens of thousands. To speak less gravely, however,

may we not trace some of the most absurd follies of these weak minds to this delusive principle? What do you think of the man who gave an enormous price for pea-shells to throw before his door, that the world might talk of him as a rich luxurious epicure?"

"You have no business to quarrel with the principle," said Mr. Herbert. "When it does its worst, it makes a little mind more exquisitely ridiculous; when it does its best, it stimulates a great one to those intense exertions which produce splendid deeds. Man is naturally an indolent, self-indulgent being. I do not except the best specimens; and I am not at all certain that there would be a hero to achieve mighty deeds, or a poet to celebrate them, if it were not for this said vanity, of which you speak so disrespectfully."

"Poor human nature!" exclaimed Constance; "surely it is traduced now."

"Does not the love of fame work wonders?" asked Mr. Herbert; "and what is it but a modification of vanity?"

"Oh! light and darkness are not more distinct," exclaimed Sir Henry. "Can we for a moment confound the glow of patriotism, and

the bright beamings of genius, with that paltry love of notoriety which arises from vanity?"

"You choose to slander the principle by prefixing that contemptuous epithet," said Mr. Herbert; "but, to whatever object it is applied, it remains essentially the same. You may as well find fault with the steam-engine, because it can weave a ribband as well as weigh an anchor."

"No, no," replied Mrs. Grenville, laughing; "there is something useful effected in both cases. But that love of notoriety which makes a man take pains to put on the cap and bells, merely that the world may look, and listen, and laugh, may be called paltry without slander."

"It is precisely the same principle," persisted Mr. Herbert, "that makes a hero buckle on his helmet."

"What, is patriotism then a mere high-sounding word?" said Constance. "Are there none among the heroes of the olden times, whose deathless names still kindle admiration; none who fought and bled purely for the love of freedom and their country?"

"They fought and bled for the *deathless name* of which you make such honourable mention," said Mr. Herbert. "The truth is, that this

principle is more mixed up with human motives than we are willing to allow. It despatched Columbus across the Atlantic, Cook round the world, and Belzoni to the desert; and I have a strong suspicion that it has not only sent many a pilgrim to the holy shrine, but even a few martyrs to the stake."

There was a general outcry against Mr. Herbert: — he had slandered the good and great of former ages; and it was not to be borne.

"It may have crept in occasionally as a subordinate motive," pursued Mrs. Grenville; "but other, and better feelings mingled with it. — There appears to me this essential difference between the love of fame, and the love of notoriety — the one ends in itself, is satisfied with driving six horses in a tandem, or wearing sixteen capes to a coat; the other is blended and incorporated with a love of excellence; it pants not merely for an immortal name — that name must be a spell to conjure up the fair forms of virtue and honour. Surely the love of notoriety is one thing, the love of fame another."

"They are different modifications of the same thing," observed the pertinacious Mr. Herbert. "The oil that feeds my solitary

lamp, would, in a different proportion, supply a beacon, or a light-house."

"Ah! but the quality is distinct:" exclaimed Mrs. Grenville.

"Who can doubt it?" said Sir Henry. "Can any thing be more different from the restless littleness of vanity, than the sustained exertion and personal sacrifice inspired by a love of fame? It appears to me a fine impulse associated with genius, with pure and elevated feeling, and leading to the highest excellence."

"Not to the highest excellence. — I quarrel with your superlative," observed Mrs. Grenville. It is a principle more pure, more holy, more disinterested than the love of fame, that leads to the *highest* excellence — to sacrifices purely and perfectly disinterested, in which not a shadow of self-reference mingles — to deeds that receive not the meed of mortal praise, and are never blazoned to mortal ear. Such alone meet my conception of the moral sublime; but I think with you, that the love of fame — of immortal fame, is rarely felt; and only by minds of the highest order. The majority are insensible to its influence. They hear in the valleys of life

no voice but that of necessity, and are below the flight of fame."

"The principal in this case is diverted, but not extinct," said Mr. Herbert; "the combustibles are there; they want only the kindling spark. Waller was right in his notion when he said,

> 'Great Julius on the mountain bred,
> A flock, perhaps, of sheep had led;
> He that the world subdued, had been
> But the best wrestler on the green.'"

"No," returned Sir Henry; "I believe that where the genuine love of fame is implanted, it inspires that intensity and continuity of exertion which accomplish the end in view. We see it bursting the fetters of circumstances, trampling on obstacles, triumphing amidst difficulties. It beholds sunshine, where others see only the cloud and storm; the goal in full and brilliant light, when, to common eyes, the path to it appears dim and indistinct; and it is peculiar to such minds to foresee their own immortality. 'I paint for eternity,' lent a magic to the pencil of Apelles. Did not our Milton foresee his own immortality? and was not the conviction reward and stimulus enough?"

"Now, I have rather a fellow-feeling with Anacreon," said Mr. Herbert, "who desired his friends to let him quaff the wine and wear the garlands with which they intended to honour his tomb. The praise that echoes only over the grave, is, after all, but an unsubstantial sort of guerdon."

"Unsubstantial!" echoed Sir Henry. "Is it nothing, then, to awaken the sympathy of ardent spirits, to kindle the flame of heroism, to quicken the pursuit of science and the love of virtue? Is it nothing to excite, age after age, the love and reverence of godlike minds?"

There was a moment's pause; and Constance, opening a volume of Miss Baillie's works, placed it in Mr. Herbert's hand, and pointed to the lines: —

"Oh! who shall lightly say that fame
Is nothing but an empty name?
Whilst in that sound there is a charm,
The nerves to brace, the heart to warm;
As thinking of the mighty dead,
The young from slothful couch will start,
And vow, with lifted hands outspread,
Like them, to act a noble part.

"Oh! who shall lightly say that fame
Is nothing but an empty name?

When but for those, our mighty dead,
All ages past a blank would be,
Sunk in oblivion's murky bed,
A desert bare, a shipless sea:
They are the distant objects seen,
The lofty marks of what has been.

"Oh! who shall lightly say that fame
Is nothing but an empty name?
When memory of the mighty dead
To earth-worn pilgrim's wistful eye,
The brightest rays of cheering shed,
That point to immortality!
A twinkling speck, but fixed and bright,
To guide us through the dreary night;
Each hero shines, and lures the soul,
To gain the distant happy goal."

"That settles the matter in your opinion and Miss Baillie's," said Mr. Herbert; "and I am not ungallant enough to enter the lists armed with reason and logic against two ladies, and one of them a poet."

CHAP. VII.

" Conversation here is a dull game of chess, carried on by slow moves and deliberate checks." LADY MORGAN.

" With mild complacency to hear,
Tho' somewhat long the tale appear;
The dull relation to attend,
Which mars the story you could mend:
'Tis more than wit, 'tis moral beauty,
'Tis pleasure rising out of duty;
Nor vainly think the time you waste,
When temper triumphs over taste."

MRS. H. MORE.

THE harmony of principle and feeling upon all important points which subsisted between Mrs. Grenville and Constance, added something of the charm of friendship to the endearing tie of maternal and filial love. Blended with the sacred duties of kindred, were the sweet companionship and confidence which spring from congeniality of moral and intellectual taste; but there were minor points upon which they did not think alike, upon which Constance ac-

quiesced in Mrs. Grenville's decisions rather from deference than conviction.

Under the care of aunt Ellen, she had acquired an extreme fastidiousness with respect to society, and not a few erroneous notions as to the extent of her social duties. Aunt Ellen would not acknowledge the authority of any established rules in her code of courtesy: it was regulated solely by her own taste and feelings. She scrupled not to reject civilities, to leave calls unnoticed, and to break off acquaintanceship with uncourteous abruptness. "Why should we trouble ourselves to keep up the farce of visiting these heartless insipid people?" she would say to Constance. "We suit so little, that it must be a sacrifice on both sides: the sooner we are released from the penalty of mutual hypocrisy the better."

Constance perfectly coincided in these conclusions. Nothing, in her opinion, could be more natural, wise, or logical. She forgot that, of the premises, one-half at least had been taken for granted. The effect of this system had been to place them on terms of cordial intimacy with the chosen few; and of ill-disguised hostility with the neglected many. The good-

natured and placable, indeed, were contented to laugh, and designate Ellen as very eccentric; but, in many cases, wounded pride and self-love had recourse to more emphatic epithets.

In this select circle, however, made up of dear friends and kind intimates, Constance had passed the greater part of her life. One peep she had taken at London and its gaieties, in a visit of three months to a family of distinction, distantly related to Colonel Grenville. They formed part of what is called the very first world, and they did the honours of this new world to their country cousin with good-breeding and good nature.

A fair pageant it appeared to Constance;

> "Brilliant all and light,
> A thronging scene of figures bright."

But, after all, it was but a pageant; and amidst the glitter, and sparkle, and brilliant frivolity of that scene, there were moments in which Constance had felt like the knight of a fairy tale, who after passing some hours in an enchanted palace, amidst beauty, music, and perfume, suddenly finds the spell dissolved, and

awakes in the grey of the morning, chill and desolate, on a lone and dreary heath.

The heart and mind were too little called into action to satisfy her. All the higher ends, all the lofty purposes of life, if not acknowledged, were kept so steadily and completely out of sight, that as far as any practical effect was concerned, they were absolutely forgotten.

Constance found it to be an atmosphere in which the best principles and feelings were likely to melt away. Contemptible as it was to live for mere amusement, yet the habit was most infectious; and she felt herself gliding into it, with such strange facility, that she was glad to escape from this great and gay world, to a safer region; to that little world of warm affections, kindly feelings, early friends, and heartfelt intimacies, which aunt Ellen had taught her to love; and she returned to her village home, not only unspoiled, but with increased zest for its simple pleasures.

But though unhurt by the seductive influence of gaiety, she was as fastidious as ever in the choice of society, and to associate with those who neither gratified the heart, nor stimulated

the intellect, appeared to her a very needless sacrifice.

Constance discovered, soon after her residence at the Priory, that Mrs. Grenville entertained very different opinions to aunt Ellen, and pursued a very different plan. She considered the village in which she had fixed her home as a sphere of usefulness, where all the charities of life were to be exercised, and its kindliest feelings cherished. Her intimacies would of course be regulated by those laws of affinity, which the heart and understanding acknowledge; but she intended to live on terms of friendly intercourse with those around her, that she might show that ready sympathy in their pleasures and pains which makes its way to every human heart. This could not be done without the sacrifice of a little time, and in many cases of a little taste; but it was not on that account to be left undone. "To rejoice with those that rejoice, and to weep with those that weep," was, in her opinion, a Christian duty which could be very imperfectly fulfilled by persons who confined all social intercourse within the little circle defined by a nice and fastidious taste.

Constance would not have hesitated for a

moment to acknowledge the excellence of Mrs. Grenville's theory, but its practical consequences appeared to her not a little irksome; and though too well-bred and respectful to offer any opposition to her mother's arrangements, an expressive reluctance of manner sufficiently discovered her sentiments.

She was meditating, with no very rejoicing aspect, over a little three-cornered billet which had just made its appearance, when Sir Henry and Percy were announced.

As Constance threw the note carelessly on the table, Percy exclaimed, "Right glad am I not to have been the writer of that triangular effusion; it has thrown quite a penseroso shade over your countenance."

"Yes; it is just as welcome as a summons to the cave of Trophonius," replied Constance.

"I do not think even the influence of that spot would affect Percy's spirits," said Sir Henry, "or interfere with his inveterate habit of making himself agreeable."

Percy defended himself from the charge of being inveterately and invariably agreeable. He declared that he would not be invariably any thing for an empire.

"I could bring a whole army of witnesses to prove it a libel," said he, "to say nothing of my tailor and cook. Besides, I quarrel with the phrase, making himself agreeable. It is a contradiction in terms. You may make yourself rich, or wise, or learned, if you think proper; you may make yourself a philosopher, if you think it worth while, or a coxcomb, with very little trouble; but as to making yourself agreeable, it would be as easy to mould yourself into an Apollo. The very effort destroys the effect."

"You think then," observed Sir Henry, "as Dogberry did of reading and writing, that it comes by nature, that it is an instinctive, unacquirable, incommunicable faculty."

"Why, limited as my experience is," replied Percy, "it has been my unhappy lot to witness such waste of energy in this way, such cruel and unsuccessful distortions of mind and body, that I would rather go with Parry to the North Pole, and be shut up amidst snow and darkness for half a year, than be doomed to faire l'agréable for half a day. Now, my dear Mrs. Grenville, I appeal to you. Consult the wide range of your experience, and bear witness for me. Can

any thing be more excruciating than these would-be agreeables?"

"They are trying to be sure," said Mrs. Grenville with a smile; "but there is another variety occasionally springing up in society, which I find it far more difficult to tolerate, the would-be disagreeables, who claim a right to think as they please, talk as they please, and act as they please; a privileged race in their own opinion; a presumptuous one in the opinion of others."

"Ah! but we only meet with a few rare specimens of these," returned Percy; "and we can be amused by their impertinence, or we can philosophise upon their motives and mistakes; but the others we encounter by dozens in every drawing-room in Christendom."

"In spite of your contempt for them, I would rather be numbered with the large class than the small one," said Mrs. Grenville.

"But the non-agreeables are spared the disgrace of failure at any rate," observed Constance; "if they excite aversion, they escape contempt: they may be disliked, but they cannot be despised."

"And do you think aversion the least evil of the two?" asked Sir Henry.

"Not, perhaps, the least evil, but the least difficult to endure," replied Constance.

"Undoubtedly!" exclaimed Percy. "Who would not rather be shot through the heart at once by a cannon ball, than stung to death by insects."

"Happily," said Mrs. Grenville, "we may walk quietly through the world, without being reduced to such a dilemma: the harmless art of pleasing will save us from so fatal an alternative."

"The *art* of pleasing!" echoed Constance, with emphasis.

"Yes, the art of pleasing," resumed Mrs. Grenville. "In spite of that equivocal smile which plays round your mouth, I venture to repeat the term. It is an art well worth acquiring."

"And so you really believe, my dear madam," said Percy, "that the talent of charming may be communicated *secundum artem?*"

"I really believe," said Mrs. Grenville, laughing, "that the art of pleasing may not only be taught, but that it is our positive duty to learn it."

"I should think sincerity, feeling, and frankness, rather formidable impediments to this acquisition," observed Constance.

"I suspect that we do not always call things by their right names," said Mrs. Grenville. "A hasty judgment, rashly pronounced, sometimes passes current with ourselves for sincerity, and crude opinions, abruptly expressed, for frankness."

"You were certainly born with the faculty of making nice distinctions, my dear Mrs. Grenville," said Percy; "and I dare say Gall and Spurzheim would account for it very satisfactorily. Now, for my part, I am content to carry my mind as I carry my watch. I am satisfied if it tells me the hour, without troubling myself about its springs and contrivances."

"It may be useful to be sufficiently acquainted with the mechanism to be able to regulate it judiciously," observed Mrs. Grenville.

"But now as to the positive duty of being agreeable," resumed Percy, "do have the charity to tell me by what process am I to be metamorphosed into a very charming fellow. Initiate me, I implore you, into the mysteries of the art."

"Do not be rash," said Mrs. Grenville.

"You know not what probationary exercises may be necessary."

"Oh! I am not to be terrified," returned Percy. "Do you undertake to impart it as Paul Pensive proposed to teach sensibility on mathematical principles? or shall we con over Lord Chesterfield, and get the Polite Preceptor by heart? What code are we to study?"

"Simply that which teaches us to bear and forbear," replied Mrs. Grenville. "The art of pleasing must be cultivated, not as a grace, but as a virtue; and it never can be successfully practised without the habit of self-control."

"And so," said Constance, "not an atom of the real character is to peep out. We are to think by rule, feel by rule, and talk by rule; and all for the sake of pleasing people who are not worth pleasing. Oh! pardon me, my dear mother; but it seems such an artificial system."

"And the death-blow of originality," added Percy. "One might as well expect a man in fetters to dance a pas seul."

"There would be no fetters in the case," returned Mrs. Grenville. "I would only provide you in your journey through life with armour,

in which you would move with more security, and with not an atom less ease and grace."

"But why encumber ourselves with armour at all?" asked Constance. "Why not be content with nature as she is? Why not simply, and with singleness of heart, express all we think and feel?"

"Because it may be doubted," replied Mrs. Grenville, "whether fallible creatures always think and feel precisely as they ought to do. It is just possible that their feelings may be capricious, and their conclusions erroneous."

"But, my dear mother, think of the wearisome monotony of common-place visiting and general society. Now, what is it that creates this tiresome uniformity, but the trammels which are worn by common consent?"

"It cannot be denied," observed Sir Henry, "that a certain insipid mediocrity every where abounds."

"Yes, indeed," said Constance; "mixing in society is very much like pacing up and down a garden walled all round; full of straight walks nicely rolled, and flowers tied up in prim array on each side. Really we may be forgiven for wishing to get rid of the fence, and take a peep

at nature with her own hills and vales, sun and shade, weeds and flowers."

"Granting that society is monotonous," replied Mrs. Grenville, "which I am not disposed to do —"

"Not monotonous!" exclaimed Constance, with uplifted eyes. "Oh! my dear mother, with your rich mind, and your warm heart, can you come to such a conclusion? I know you are a miracle of patience; but look around at the village of Elton — except the manor-house and the rectory."

"Two exceptions already," said Mrs. Grenville smiling.

"Well, but think of last night!" continued Constance; "think of tiresome Mrs. Bentley! and dull Mrs. Murray! and formal Mrs. Jones! No wonder they are widows. I am sure they are enough to kill any body."

Percy laughed. Mrs. Grenville looked grave.

"If you could have heard Mrs. Bentley prose!" exclaimed Constance, with an appealing look at her mother.

"I know it all, Miss Grenville: her figure is before me at this moment," observed Percy,

laughing. "I hear the rustle of her silk. I see her hovering ominously near."

"Yes," said Constance; "and unhappily the omen does not, like most other omens, end in nothing. How often have I rivetted my eyes upon a distant corner, lest I should precipitate the catastrophe of her settling vis-à-vis to me; but all in vain; the fatal moment comes."

"But is retreat impracticable?" asked Percy. "Is there no desperate rapidity of movement that can save one in the moment of peril?"

"Why, occasionally," returned Constance, "an escape may be effected; but it requires skilful generalship to execute the manœuvre neatly; and it is often quite impossible. We are caught, perhaps, in an unlucky angle of the room, which baffles ingenuity in that way; and there is nothing left but to be resigned to our fate, to listen with patience, and bow in acquiescence."

"Mrs. Bentley's stories, I believe, are by no means in the true epic style, having a beginning, a middle, and an end," observed Percy.

"No: they combine two striking peculiarities," said Constance; "they are at once interminable and incomprehensible."

"Dreadful!" exclaimed Percy.

"Martyrdom!" muttered Sir Henry.

"And martyrdom without honour, glory, or utility," added Constance.

"Is self-gratification, then, the only object for which it is worth while to mingle in society?" asked Mrs. Grenville quietly.

"No, certainly," replied Constance; "though it must be confessed that it is rather a natural stimulus."

"You acknowledge, however," said Mrs. Grenville, "that there may be other motives worth acting upon; motives of kindness, of delicacy, of consideration."

"Oh! if you attack me on moral grounds," exclaimed Constance, "I must take up your tone, and urge my moral objections. Consider the time, the precious, inestimable, invaluable time, that is wasted with those dull, prosy, tiresome people."

"Yes, yes, the time, consider the time," continued Percy, laughing. 'Time destroyed is suicide,' 'Moments seize' 'Oh for yesterday to come!' I could muster a host of poets, moralists, and divines in array against you."

"If hours could be improved only by being enjoyed," replied Mrs. Grenville, composedly, "I should grant the force of your objection; but I rather think, in the present instance, if we analyse this prodigious anxiety to economise time, we shall find that it is nothing but refined selfishness. Now, I cannot think that time wasted in which we sacrifice our own taste to the gratification of those whose sources of enjoyment are scanty and limited. Consider the circumstances of the very trio whom we are speaking of. Their accommodations are few, their pleasures still fewer; an evening passed in society is an era in their monotonous life."

"Oh! that we could but visit them by proxy; poor, dear, dull creatures!" exclaimed Constance impatiently. "And to see you wasted on such people; it is too provoking."

"Spare your sympathy, my dear," returned Mrs. Grenville. "Much as I love the feast of reason, and the flow of soul, there is a moral discipline of the heart, to be exercised in society, more valuable by half. Besides, the art of pleasing might be practised with very good

effect in the society which appears to you at present so flat, stale, and unprofitable."

"But how can it be practised, my dear mother, when there is not a single subject in common — not a hope, not a thought, not a feeling in unison?"

"In such a case, what refuge have we but in silence?" said Sir Henry.

"Why, if we go into company in buckram and brocade, wrapt up in a sense of our own superiority," said Mrs. Grenville —

"Oh! no; that would be detestable," interrupted Constance; "it is not a sense of superiority, but a melancholy feeling of unfitness, that seems to cast a spell over the faculties. You know there are bodies in nature which cannot be made to combine, between which there is no natural affinity; and I believe there are minds precisely in the same predicament."

"Oh! the ingenuity of self-deception!" exclaimed Mrs. Grenville; "what masks and devices it does provide! Believe me, at the touch of real, unaffected benevolence, the spell would dissolve — the repulsive force be counteracted."

"Benevolence!" echoed Percy. "Surely you

are digging too deep now. At any rate it is an affair of mere bienséance."

"No," replied Mrs. Grenville; "courtesy is the current coin of society, but benevolence is the sterling ore that constitutes its value. Counterfeits indeed are sometimes well got up, but in the wear and tear of the world, their poverty soon betrays itself. Now, the gold may pass through a thousand hands, may be exchanged with prince or peasant, and retain all its beauty and value."

"Benevolence may teach us to tolerate these dull people," said Percy; "but after all it is heavy work."

"No," said Mrs. Grenville; "to feel that we are giving pleasure, and exercising kindness, will lighten the task; and though the intellect may be somewhat quiescent, the heart will be alive and awake."

"Ah!" said Constance, "courtesy may dress the face in artificial smiles, but —"

"No; benevolence will light up real ones. Besides," continued Mrs. Grenville, "mortal beings travelling the same road to the same home, must have some feelings in common; there must be subjects interesting to all. Depend upon it, there are chords to which every

human heart will vibrate, if touched by a skilful and delicate hand."

"Yes; but then this delicate and skilful hand is so rare," replied Constance. "I am sure if I attempted to strike these notes, I should produce nothing but discord."

"The first attempt might not be successful; but there would be sweet melody in time," replied Mrs. Grenville.

"I have often admired the dexterity with which you contrive to give an interesting turn to an insipid subject," said Constance; "but then you have some peculiar, intuitive, instinctive talent for such things. Now, I am not initiated into the magical art of educing something out of nothing. I never could work wonders."

"Why, we are apt to go into what we term dull company, with the expectation and intention of being dull," observed Mrs. Grenville; "we contribute our full quota of silence, stiffness, and insipidity, and then return home to wonder at the stupidity of the evening. — The Chinese ladies, who cripple their feet, might as well wonder that they cannot run a race with Atalanta."

"You think then," said Percy, "that if the

old proverb were acted upon, 'Let every one mend one,' society would assume a new and charming aspect?"

"That is, if human nature were precisely what it is not, society would be delightful," said Sir Henry.

"If human nature were what it might be," said Mrs. Grenville, "what self-discipline, self-control, and self-cultivation would make it — if Christian principles were not left like ore in the mine, but brought into current daily use —"

"Yes, yes; if Eden were still blooming round us, or Utopia could but be discovered," said Sir Henry, smiling, and rising to take his leave, "what a charming world we should awake in every morning!"

"Ah! but a great deal might be done, in this work-day world of ours," persisted Mrs. Grenville, as she shook hands with them in parting, "if, instead of vainly wishing to remodel the world, we remembered the good old rule — 'Commencez par le commencement;' and each tried our skill upon ourselves."

CHAP. VIII.

" Kind was thy boyish heart and true,
When rear'd together there ;
Through the old woods like fawns ye flew,
Where is thy brother — where?

Well didst thou love him then, and he
Still at thy side was seen ;
How is it that such things can be,
As though they ne'er had been ?"

MRS. HEMANS.

" Child of the country ! free as air
Art thou, and as the sunshine fair !
I sing of thee ; 'tis sweet to sing,
Of such a fair and gladsome thing."

ALLAN CUNNINGHAM.

" A LETTER from Edward !" exclaimed Constance, breaking the seal with affectionate eagerness ; — " then he has not quite forgotten us. — Perhaps, my dear mother, we shall hear that he is very soon coming to the Priory."

A gentle, and scarcely audible, sigh escaped Mrs. Grenville as this hope was expressed, and she appeared to be occupied with some painful ruminations while Constance was busy with her letter. The look of animation with which it had been opened, gradually faded into one of

disappointment as she proceeded with its contents; till at length a glow of displeasure mantled over her cheek, and she folded it up in silence.

" Is Edward well, my love?" asked Mrs. Grenville, after a short pause.

" Very well, I believe," returned Constance; " he says nothing on the subject."

" And does he talk of paying us a visit?" enquired Mrs. Grenville, in an accent that indicated but little expectation of a satisfactory reply.

" He says very little about it," replied Constance, vainly struggling to repress her emotion; " indeed he seems determined to disappoint our hopes in every way."

Edward Grenville was four years older than his sister; and during the period of childhood, they had scarcely ever been separated; they had frolicked away the hours in happy thoughtlessness, conned their lessons side by side, and knelt together at morning and evening prayer.

The first grief that Constance knew, was the pang of parting with Edward when he was sent to school. — It was such a breaking up of her childish happiness; such a change from the pleasure of companionship to the tedium of solitude; — listless and lonely she wandered about,

missing his merry voice and bounding foot-step, and counting the weeks and days to his return. —Then came the glad moment of re-union — the happy holiday—all sunshine and leisure. Then was Constance initiated into a variety of active sports, which procured her frequent lectures from her nurse upon the crying sin of making herself not fit to be seen; and grave remonstrances upon the sad catastrophe of a torn frock, and a bonnet bent till it looked *no how*. It was formally represented to aunt Ellen, that Constance had been seen nearly at the top of a ladder, and actually detected in trying to climb a tree. But aunt Ellen received these evil reports with composure, and neither interfered nor remonstrated. She saw the cheeks of Constance glowing with health, her eyes bright with joy, her spirits buoyant with excess of glee, and she let the matter take its course.

" At fifteen Constance had left off mounting ladders and climbing trees; but Edward was not the less her favourite companion. He had his flute and pencil, and they could play and sketch together. Then it was delightful to share his rides and rambles; to loiter in the soft bright days of autumn, amidst woods, and

by hedge-rows; to fill her basket from the hazel boughs which he held down within her reach; to scamper over hill and dale, amidst the sparkling frosts of winter, or linger with a book by his side, while

> "Softly stealing with his wat'ry gear
> Along the brooks, the crimson-spotted fry
> He did delude: the whilst amused they hear,
> Now the hoarse stream, and now the zephyr's sigh,
> Attuned to the birds and woodland melody."

Constance had seen comparatively little of him since these boyish days, but they were still bright and vivid in her remembrance. The chilling influence of dissipation had not interposed to check the kindly warmth of her early affections, or weaken the silver links and silken ties of kindred. Round the domestic hearth such ties are cherished into beautiful stability; while in the atmosphere of the idly busy world of fashion and pleasure, they often become so attenuated as to be scarcely felt or remembered.

Constance was just beginning to learn that such things could be; and the lesson weighed heavily on her heart.

At Oxford, college friends and gay intimacies stole Edward from the domestic circle, and his visits became shorter, and less frequent;

still, however, the glow of affection continued; and when after the purchase of his commission, his regiment was ordered abroad, the brother and sister parted, as dear relations part for the first time on such occasions. Hope and fear were, as usual, busy with their whispers; and many a fond injunction and reiterated promise mingled with the parting tear.

For some time an animated correspondence was maintained. Edward's letters were long, lively, and affectionate; they spoke of England and home with unaffected attachment, and of Constance with unabated tenderness. But as years rolled away, the character of his letters changed; they became short and unfrequent, and his heart and thoughts were evidently preoccupied or estranged.

There was a tinge of romance in the character of Constance, which not only quickened her perception of this change, but deepened the sensitive feelings it awakened. She did not often enter upon the subject with her mother, for she knew that it was one that pressed painfully upon her heart; though Mrs. Grenville, with her accustomed sweetness and benignity, talked of the powerful influence of surrounding

objects upon a volatile mind, and her feelings were tempered by that lovely spirit of "charity," which "hopeth all things, and endureth all things."

Six months, however, had now elapsed since Edward's return to England, and in that time he had been satisfied to pass a few days only with his mother and sister, and to talk of a longer visit. Even during these few days, Mrs. Grenville and Constance had felt that chill of disappointment which creeps over the heart, when an object dear to its affections, discloses feelings and principles at variance with its own sense and standard of right.

Edward's disposition, indeed, appeared as gay and lively as ever, and his manner might have bribed the judgment of less nice, or less interested observers; but the vigilant eye of real affection too soon detected a certain heartlessness of character; an unconscious, yet predominating selfishness, which, blending with very light and loose opinions upon moral and religious subjects, awakened their fears as much as it disappointed their hopes. They felt that dissonance of moral taste between Edward and themselves which checks the tide and flow of

affectionate feeling, and mars the pleasure of domestic intercourse.

Reluctant, however, even to express this opinion to each other, they endeavoured to solace themselves with a vague hope that they might do him injustice. The long visit he talked of was to realize this hope; but the happy epoch seemed as distant as ever. His letter to Constance said nothing definite on the subject, but was thus expressed:—

"My dear Con,

"I am afraid I am deep in your black books for not having indulged you with my sweet company long ere this; but *time*, *time*, that ugly old churl, who, since my return to England has borrowed another pair of wings out of pure spite to me, is the only person to blame in the affair. Not a single moment have I had to spare. If you could see my list of engagements, indispensable engagements, you would lift up those radiant eyes of yours in pity and amazement. This is the simple truth; so I hope your little ladyship will accede to that notable axiom—'Necessitas,' &c. as we say in Latin. In another week, I shall be on the wing for the north, with

a family — such a family! — they are really a glorious set! — they know how to enjoy life! such spirit! such dash! After all, London is the very paradise of society. Why will you bury yourselves among those supremely dull things, the old oaks and old spinsters of Elton? I really beg pardon of the Lennox's — I had forgotten for a moment that most august house, which flourished before the flood. Percy is a lad of spirit; and Sir Henry is passable, only he bows sometimes so like Sir Charles Grandison, that I long to put on him a wig and ruffles. A fine estate is amazingly wasted on that class of fellows. I would wager a trifle that he never fells an oak, or sells an acre. Now, is it not a species of insanity to love our ancestors better than ourselves? to curtail the pleasures of life for the sake of those cabalistic words, our paternal acres? or to go about the world, looking meagre and miserly, because of our posterity forsooth? I quite enter into the feelings of that gentleman, blunderer as he was thought, who said, 'We are always at work for *posterity*: I should be glad to know what posterity has ever done for us?'

"I hope, my dear Constance, you feel the full

force of this reasoning; for as I mean my theory and practice to be one piece of beautiful consistency, I will just whisper into your ear a little project of mine, which you can disclose to my mother in your prettiest way, and at the happiest moment.

"I will only premise that I am not of a calculating turn, and consider the petty detail of ways and means a great bore; and would rather fight a battle than cast an account. Now, the only drawback that I know of to the delicious pleasures of a London life, as they offer themselves to a young soldier, is the astonishing facility with which they drain the pocket. Mine is just now in a state of melancholy and most inconvenient depletion; and as it comports not with the dignity and honour of a Grenville to have recourse to paltry subterfuges and mean contrivances, so my paternal acres must be transferred to other hands. If it were one of those substantial concerns that could be nursed out of a consumption by skilful management, I would try something in that way; but the poor little nook will fetch only a few thousands; the utmost will be fifteen, Hoggart tells me;

so it must even go; not, however, till after the shooting season; for I am determined to have two or three glorious days in the old woods again. I wish I could help it; it is just the sort of thing I am afraid that my mother will feel — though it is not at all worth while; but she is really too good to be plagued; she ought to have had a different description of son. Now, Sir Henry would have suited her exactly — a happy thought—perhaps a prophetic one. If you cannot manage the matter, Constance, beauty and wit are sadly thrown away upon you. Frown, if you please; I am not near enough to be awed into silence; but if I were at your elbow I should only whisper, 'Oh! what a deal of scorn looks beautiful,' &c. Sir Henry has certainly all that love of the cardinal virtues which mothers delight in.

"Well, adieu! I ought to be very sorry and sentimental, I know, but it is not in my way; I must leave those graceful practices to you. Do not love me the less for not being a pattern of prudence. Prudence is but a rascally virtue after all. I quote authority after your own heart — a celebrated D. D., wiser than all the

seven sages put together; so do not put on a logical look, and fancy that the pretty eloquence of ladies' lore will disprove my position.

I am, dear Con,

Yours affectionately,

EDWARD GRENVILLE."

"I am sorry you should have the pain of reading his heartless rhodomontade," said Constance, kissing her mother affectionately as she placed the letter in Mrs. Grenville's hand; "but perhaps your influence may still do good. How strange! how disgraceful!" continued she, watching the varying expression of her mother's countenance, — "to talk with such unfeeling levity, of alienating the estate of his forefathers. I would rather a thousand times toil day and night like the meanest mechanic — but he can have no heart at all."

"Its best feelings are deadened by the withering influence of dissipation, by what he calls a life of pleasure," replied Mrs. Grenville. "Alas! his habit of boundless self-indulgence is weaving a web of misery, from which it will be almost impossible to extricate him. I am afraid his embarrassments must already be formidable, or

he would not think of having recourse to so decided a measure."

Mrs. Grenville paused in sad meditation for a few minutes — "But, however," resumed she, "we will not give up all hope — something may still be done — I will write to him immediately — remonstrance is my duty; though I fear his levity is so unconquerable, that any thing like a serious appeal will be dismissed as common parental cant; still it must be made. Alas! that a letter to one so closely allied by the dear bond of kindred, should be an irksome or difficult task!" continued she, as seating herself at her desk with tearful eyes, she began the following letter.

"To Captain Grenville.

"I write to you, my dear Edward, with a reluctance which I had hoped never to feel. The language of remonstrance is as painful to me, as it will be irksome to you; but by forbearing to use it, I should compromise at once the sacred duties, and affectionate feelings of a mother.

"You cannot doubt that your letter of this morning inflicted a severe pang; but how severe,

none but my own heart can know. It has destroyed many a cherished hope, and fond anticipation; and conjured up, in their stead, a long train of anxieties and heart-aches. I had seen you often, in those dreams which mothers love to dream, reposing on your well-earned laurels, rich in domestic comfort, loved, honoured, and happy.

"That 'poor little nook,' of which you speak so slightingly, was the scene where I delighted to place you. It has been nearly three centuries in your family — it was your own birth-place. Well do I remember the festive sounds with which it echoed on the day of your christening, and the fervent prayers that were breathed for you by the two fond hearts that cherished you as their richest treasure.

"Your father's local attachments were strong; his indeed was the mind to feel them in their full force. Amidst the occupations and pleasures of a busy life in a distant climate, the home of his childhood was dear to his remembrance. Often, with a glow of animated hope, would he talk of our return thither, and of the improvements he intended to make. 'By the time our boy inherits it,' he would say, 'it will

be quite beautiful!' He little dreamed, that the spot so dear to him would pass into the hands of strangers; that it would be transferred to them, with the same indifference with which we should dispose of the most paltry bauble.

"And to what is it thus sacrificed? To the strong claim of duty? for any purpose of benevolence or patriotism? No; to supply for a moment the insatiate demands of luxurious profligacy, to speed you on the road to disgrace, misery, and ruin. But I am powerless to restrain. I can only plead with the earnestness of affection — I can only conjure you to pause for an instant, and look forward. In what will this lavish expenditure, this boundless self-indulgence, end? You are so dazzled by the passing scene, that you see not whither it leads, and how it must terminate. I see but too plainly, and it fills my heart with anguish. When you have anticipated and exhausted every resource, will your desires contract with your contracted income? Will habits of self-denial and economy be miraculously grafted on those of profusion and prodigality? Alas! the tyranny of habit, and the despotism of self-will, are not so easily thrown off. Their influence will

be undiminished — you will be fettered by a thousand embarrassments — harrassed by pecuniary difficulties, in all their wretched and entangling minutiæ. You may fancy that the spirit of youth will enable you to conquer difficulties of any kind; but these, like the diminutive cords by which Gulliver was bound, tame the strongest mind, and quell the most buoyant spirit.

"If you do not from this moment adopt a new course, respectability and happiness must be irrecoverably lost. Nor is this the worst; graver thoughts, and deeper anxieties, blend with my feelings on this subject. Upon what principle do you now act? for what purpose do you live? Is not self-gratification your sole object? It is true that this selfishness of character does not wear a sullen or unsocial aspect; but it displays itself in a levity and inconsideration, which sets the habits, feelings, and interests of others completely at nought.

"Your present object is to cheat time, and beguile the passing hour; to mingle in the pageantry of life, and form part of its useless show, without one serious purpose, one useful aim, one higher thought. And is it for this, that

you are endowed with intellect, feeling, and capacity?

"You may forget, but I cannot forget, that you are a responsible creature, and, more, an heir of immortality. I can lay no flattering unction to my soul — I can discover no act of indemnity which privileges you to waste the boon of health, fortune, and intellect, in sensual, selfish pursuits — to act as if the dictates of reason, and the awful truths of revelation, were idle dreams.

"Can you for a moment believe that God, who bestows the very least blessing upon the meanest creature for some specific use, has enriched you with such noble gifts, to be trifled with at pleasure, and considered as the mere toys of caprice and humour? It cannot be. Reason, conscience, the very voice of God himself has spoken; and will you madly refuse to listen? There will come a moment, when that voice must be heard. You have not ignorance to plead. Light, in all its splendour and purity shines around us. Our duties are written with a sunbeam, and the language of the book of truth is powerful and definite. 'Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know,

that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.'

"I implore you not to dismiss these considerations as mere words of course. If you knew what it cost me to tell you such painful truths, I think the common instinct of nature would induce you to listen.

"We have felt your protracted absence, but I spare you all reproach on that subject. I will only say, that, whenever you come, you will be welcome. Why not give us a few days before your projected tour? We might talk together over your affairs, and ascertain the extent of your difficulties. You may find an abler, but not a more affectionate counsellor. Try if you can manage this — it will be a real comfort to

"Your truly affectionate mother,

"H. GRENVILLE."

In the course of the week Mrs. Grenville received the following reply to this appeal:

"MY DEAR LADY MOTHER,

"I CERTAINLY am one of the best-tempered fellows in Christendom; and you must do me the justice to believe this, when you hear that

your last letter — that sermonic, parsonic, prophetic, exhortatory letter — did not kindle a single spark of resentment in my mind. I assure you, some folks would have felt cross and savage at such an address. Not so your peerless Edward. On the contrary, its affectionate, appealing tone, absolutely touched my heart of hearts; and conscience was so disobliging, as to give me a confounded twinge. I sat grave and glum, for at least half an hour, and the shades of my ancestors hovered about me like the ghosts of the murdered round King Richard's couch. But what is to be done, my dear mother? If a poor devil is once in a vortex, he must whirl on. In the financial department, you know, great emergencies sanction strong measures. Did not certain wise statesmen, those long-headed, strong-headed, clear-headed people, find it absolutely necessary to encroach upon the sinking fund? And I must bring forward the same strong plea — necessity — in the matter of this hereditary estate of mine.

"I really can hardly tell how it has all happened. Debts have such a trick of accumulating — they gather like a snow-ball; and little elegant expenses, which appear as light as a

feather in their original state, become a mountain of miseries *en masse!*

"But away with melancholy! Do not let that witch, *Care*, disturb you with her boding voice. My conclusions, from certain premises, are precisely the reverse of yours. I have not the least doubt that poverty will have a most admirable effect on my character: it will be bark and steel to my mental constitution. Besides, I beg leave to say, that though luxurious, I am by no means effeminate. Did not I pass weeks together in the woods of America, with a rifle over my shoulder, killing my own venison, kindling my own fire, cooking my own dinner, making my own sandals, sleeping under the canopy of heaven? I should make an excellent man of the woods — a capital Robinson Crusoe! So you see I have always a resource left.

"This poverty, which wears such a grim, gaunt, terrific aspect to you, has no horrors at all for me. When all else is gone, still, as Alexander said, hope will be left; and my good sword into the bargain. A trusty blade it is, and will win its way to fortune. Courage, you know, is the first, second, and third requisite in a soldier; and I assure you I am a lion-hearted

fellow. At the sound of the trumpet, I shall throw off the masquerade dress of idleness and folly, which I wear in 'this soft piping-time of peace,' and start up a soldier every inch. I shall seek and find 'the bubble reputation at the cannon's mouth.' Hope on, then, dear mother; dismiss your apprehensions; all will be well.

"I wish I could comply with your request, and I would be at the Priory with the speed of light. If I can come down for a day, I will. At any rate, towards the close of autumn, I shall offer my dutiful homage in person.

"I am sure I would do any thing to oblige you — even become a saint, if I could; but I have not a turn that way.

"Adieu, dearest Mother,

Your affectionate

EDWARD GRENVILLE."

"P. S. A mortgage might do perhaps; but I hate half measures."

CHAP. IX.

"There can be no kernel in this light nut."
SHAKSPEARE.

A FEW days after the receipt of this letter, Constance was roused from her sleep by a pebble thrown up at her window, and the sound of a voice exclaiming in a burlesque tone,

"Up! lady fair, and braid thine hair,
And rouse thee in the breezy air." —

Hastily unclosing the shutter, she saw Edward on the lawn; and quickly performing the duties of the toilet, she was soon seen arm in arm with her brother, brushing away the early dew.

"Well! here I am, my dear girl," exclaimed he — "travelled all night on purpose to have a snug chat with you and my mother. Is not that a most dutiful and affectionate proceeding? And I mean to stay twenty-four hours, if you behave prettily to me. Come, give me a kiss — not that grave, demure, ladylike salute, but just

such a one as you were accustomed to give when I taught you to drive a hoop and play at trap-ball. — Why, my dear!" said he, contemplating her for a moment from head to foot, "you really are a very handsome person — a singularly fine creature — it would be flattering you too much to say, prodigiously like your brother. Oh! there is your own smile again: I am glad to see it. You used to be the merriest little sprite under the sun, and gravity is not at all becoming to you."

"How can I help being grave, Edward, when I think of you?"

"Grave when you think of me, my dear! Oh! that is a most unnatural effect indeed. — I assure you, thinking of Edward, the resistless Edward, brightens the eyes of many a pretty girl, and makes her heart dance with joy."

"I am surprised that you can be so light-hearted at such a moment," observed Constance.

"Why, my dear child, it is because I am a philosopher of the very first water. I do not allow myself to be disquieted about the transitory things of this transitory life. — There now, could Mr. Mortimer himself make a more proper — a more edifying speech? Do you know,

when all trades fail, I have some notion of turning parson? I think I have a talent for sermon-making; it is so straight forward. A beginning and an ending, and first, second, and third, in the middle, and there it is, cut and dried. And then I think I should become a deanery so admirably! Mr. Dean, and the Very Reverend the Dean — does not it sound well? Does not it sit well upon me? Has it not what the schoolmen call, the grace of congruity?"

Constance could not repress a laugh. "I am sure I do not know why I laugh," said she. "I am really much more inclined to cry."

"Thank you, my dear: that is the prettiest compliment you could pay me; it is an involuntary homage to my wit and genius. But you must forgive my spirits this morning. Think what it is to have escaped from smoke and duns to this bright sun and sweet air. Well, after all, the country is charming. Those woods are really magnificent. Pray, how is Sir Henry? Is that affair *en train?* I hope you do not intend to let such a peerless person — such a valuable prize, slip through your fingers. He and his estate are quite worth a little manœuvring."

"Manœuvring!" echoed Constance, with a look of disdain. "Pray, do not degrade yourself and me, by talking so strangely. I am sure I never yet saw a person who was the least worth manœuvring for."

"Oh! my dear, you are really too grand for me," replied Edward, laughing. "I cannot follow you in these flights. While you are soaring into the clouds, I am left far below on this dim speck, called earth. But it would be remarkably convenient of you to fall in love with Sir Henry. He would be such a comfortable, substantial appendage to the family: he could so easily help a lame dog over a stile now and then. Pray, how is my mother? Much in the dolefuls about me and my ways? I must practise a grave face before I see her. Enter laughing, you know, would spoil all the stage effect of this dutiful visit. There — is that solemn enough, do you think? A slight shade of despondency would be the thing, if I could manage the matter."

"Edward, you quite distress me," said Constance, gravely. "Such thorough want of feeling, I could not even have imagined."

"Why, my dear child, what is to be done in

this case? Nature cast me in a merry mould, and, for the life of me, I cannot play the weeping philosopher. Here am I, a fine, dashing, handsome young fellow, very like my sister, I allow — twenty pretty girls dying for me — master of the revels to half a hundred choice spirits. Now, can you expect such a person to look and feel like a methodist parson? To be sure, I am a few thousands poorer than I was a year or two ago, and likely to have the regal epithet, 'Lackland,' attached to my illustrious name. But what of all this? A hundred fine fellows of my acquaintance are in the same predicament — troubled with rather lean, lanky purses. And, after all, it is my own affair. I have fleeced nobody but that very respectable and truly delightful person, Edward Grenville: no widowed mother, no orphan sister, eats less bread and butter on my account."

"How can you be so very absurd?" exclaimed Constance, laughing, in spite of all her angry feelings.

"Well, but is it not time that I should make my dutiful bow to my mother? Do you know, I have some dread of her mild eyes and sweet voice? I know they will give my heart a

twinge. However, as I must either laugh or cry, I think, upon the whole, the laughing system is the wisest. Is it not better to play the fool in an air-balloon, than to sink down and flounder in the slough of despond? I assure you, when I do begin to be penitential and lachrymose, I am a most afflicting person. When once I take to sitting in sackcloth and ashes, I do it with a vengeance."

When Mrs. Grenville received her son, her emotion betrayed itself only by a slight quivering of the lip, and the tender seriousness that mingled in her welcome. Edward perceived it, and rattled away to conceal his own feelings. He talked of the politics, intrigues, and manœuvres of the world of fashion, — of St. James's and Almack's, — of levees and the Horse Guards, — of Tattersall's and Brookes's, — of rival beauties, and rival opera-dancers. Nothing could be more spirited than his portraits, — more amusing than his caricature sketches of high and gay life. But the moment breakfast was over, and Mrs. Grenville's face assumed a reflective expression, he flew to the window, declared that to stay in the house another minute in such lovely weather, would be sullen-

ness against nature; insisted upon driving his mother and sister in their pony-chair; and hurried off to superintend the preparations, that not a moment might be lost.

A long drive, ending in a long call at the rectory and the manor-house, beguiled the whole morning, and dinner was announced soon after their return.

With successful dexterity Edward contrived to parry every reference to the state of his affairs, till at length Mrs. Grenville requested that she might be indulged with five minutes serious conversation.

"Five minutes serious conversation, my dear mother!" returned he. "Why, what an awful sound! No, no: I love you a great deal too well to listen to such a request. Really," continued he, in answer to a pleading look rather than a word of Mrs. Grenville's, "the true, particular, and authentic history of my affairs would only make you very sad and very moral. You shall have that delectable exposée in black and white one of these days, if you insist upon it. But I think you had better spare yourself: it will only end in the mortifying conviction, that you have the honour to be mother to one

of that numerous class of animals, an extravagant fool. Now, as I rather wish you to have some doubts still of your affinity to the 'father of stupidity,' I think you had better be satisfied with a general notion of the state of things. Items and minutia are the deuce. You will have no peace if you once plague yourself with them; besides, can the past be recalled? And with respect to advice, my sweet mother, I never trouble any body to give it, because I never trouble myself to take it. I am a great economist of time and energy, and this plan saves considerable waste of both. Do not shake your head: I assure you mine is an improvement upon the general system; a far more honest and consistent plan. Half the world bore the other half for counsel, and then follow their own devices; now, I frankly avow that I think it the unalienable privilege of every human being, to do what is right in his own eyes; so now we understand each other." He strode rapidly up and down the room, and for a few minutes there was a pause. "Come, do not look so sad, my own mother," resumed he, "kissing her cheek. To-day, has been all sunshine and enjoyment; and we will conjure up no murky clouds to dim

the evening. If I can by any contrivance save these miserable acres of mine, I will; but we will talk no more of it.

> ' To-night at least be gay,
> Whate'er to-morrow brings.' "

He led his sister to the piano, and Mrs. Grenville withdrew to her dressing-room to think and weep; to hope against hope; and to pray with that unutterable tenderness which mothers only feel, that the fears of her foreboding heart might never be realized.

Early on the following morning Edward took his leave, with a bright gay smile, that seemed to say,

> " This life, sae far's I understand,
> Is a' enchanted fairy land,
> Where pleasure is the magic wand
> That, wielded right,
> Makes hours, like minutes, hand in hand,
> Dance by fu' light."

Constance made no comment on the anxious thoughtfulness which shaded Mrs. Grenville's brow after Edward's departure; but the gentle and increased deference of her own manner, and the watchful tenderness of every look, fell like a gleam of sunshine on the heart of her mother.

CHAP. X.

"Persons who contrive to refine away happiness, are as much too exquisite in their senses, as those to whom a rose is too sweet, or fine music too shrill; — from this elegant sense of things, Oh! reason, preserve us!" MRS. MONTAGUE.

"But some to higher hopes
Were destin'd; some within a finer mould
She wrought, and temper'd with a purer flame."
AKENSIDE.

THE next morning Sir Henry and Percy called at the Priory to pay their respects to Captain Grenville, and much polite disappointment was expressed at his unexpected departure.

"I had hoped to enlist him as my companion in a ride to-day," said Percy. "Harry is too lazy to accompany me. Pray can I do any thing for you at Southampton? I assure you my talents in the commission line are first rate. I can choose muslin or music for you with equal skill. Will you trust me?"

"You can do us a very great service," re-

plied Constance; "just call at the library, and scold Mrs. Gifford for not having sent the third volume of 'Tremaine;' she promised it by the postman yesterday; we have waited four whole days for it."

"With your heart breaking for the heroine, I suppose," said Percy —

"Oh! it is too cruel," exclaimed Constance. "My sympathies are not in general so lively for these charming phantoms, but Georgiana Evelyn is so gracefully winning, so entirely lovely, that I cannot be at all happy while she is dying of decline."

"Oh! she will not die," returned Percy, "I feel an instinctive conviction that she will recover. The author has too good taste, too much feeling to kill her: he would not do any thing so savage."

"If you have nothing better to justify your hope than the tender mercy of an author," said Constance, "it does not inspire me with the least confidence — it does not afford me the smallest consolation — they are such practised barbarians. Recollect the atrocities they perpetrate, the unprovoked murders. I believe they sometimes set the fates to work, and cut the thread of life

for the sole purpose of making us close their books with the heart-ache."

Percy laughed, and galloped off with a promise not to return without "Tremaine;" while Sir Henry, addressing Constance, said, "Is a *fin joyeuse* then, quite necessary to your enjoyment of a tale?"

"Not absolutely necessary, but certainly very conducive to my thorough enjoyment of one," replied Constance; "and the *fin tragique* indisposes me very much for its second perusal. I have no objection to a fair proportion of cloud and storm, if the sun does but break out at last. Even in a tour of pleasure, I can consent to cross a desert, or tremble at a volcano; but let my eyes repose on a soft, green, smiling landscape at the end of my journey. — Is not this your opinion too, my dear mother?"

"Why, as we walk in the garden of fiction chiefly for amusement," returned Mrs. Grenville, "I like, in the fashion of the knights of old, after traversing a gloomy forest, and being exposed to the pelting of the pitiless storm, to find myself at length in an enchanted palace, where all is bright and beautiful."

"I am afraid you will stand convicted of a

sad vulgar taste for happiness," said Sir Henry— "What would the refined Tremaine have said to you?"

"Tremaine and I should have differed upon many points," replied Mrs. Grenville. "I should have questioned the reality of his refinement — I should have been much better friends with Dr. Evelyn than with Tremaine."

"Surely refined taste and feeling are pourtrayed in that character!" observed Constance.

"Tremaine was indolent, luxurious, and self-occupied," replied Mrs. Grenville, "defects incompatible with true refinement. That is not refinement which interferes with our usefulness or happiness."

"Pardon me," said Sir Henry. "Does it not sometimes interfere with both? May not the delicate perceptions and quickened sensibility which belong to refined feelings, render the fulfilment even of acknowledged duty distasteful to us? May there not be a repugnance which would not be experienced by coarser minds and duller feelings? — an intellectual nicety, for instance, which may induce a very inconvenient degree of fastidiousness with respect to our men-

tal pleasures, whether derived from books or from society."

"Tremaine's was precisely of this character," said Mrs. Grenville, "because it was without the corrective influence of Christian principle."

"I am afraid," observed Sir Henry, "that the refinement of which you speak exists but in theory — that it is but a name."

"It is rare, perhaps, but many a beautiful specimen is to be found," replied Mrs. Grenville.

"We owe to refinement some rapturous feelings and some delicious hours; but I cannot think," said Constance in a doubtful tone, "that, upon the whole, it increases the sum of our happiness. How many things and persons does it render distasteful, not to say insufferable!"

"You are confounding fastidiousness with refinement," observed Mrs. Grenville.

"Oh! they are near relatives I am afraid," exclaimed Sir Henry.

"Yes," said Mrs. Grenville, smiling; "but, like the crab and the nonpareil, perfectly distinct, in spite of their affinity."

"I think," said Constance, "that refinement is more talked of than understood; that

which really deserves the name appears to me exceedingly rare."

"Why, amidst the present diffusion of cultivation, and where a taste for the arts is so widely disseminated, a certain degree of refinement must be very general," observed Mrs. Grenville.

"Yes, that which is the mere offspring and creature of cultivation," said Sir Henry; "but is there not a refinement which seems to belong to minds of a certain temperament, independent, in a great degree, of cultivation and circumstances? — a refinement of *mind* distinct from refinement of *manner* — existing sometimes without it? And, on the contrary, are there not some people who have a sort of practical refinement — a kind of tact which prevents their violating, in the smallest degree, the laws of propriety and good taste; and yet who have by no means that character of mind which appears essential to refinement? They have the varnish which every person may acquire by a certain process in well-bred society; but not that beauty and polish of which certain minds alone are susceptible."

"Yes," replied Mrs. Grenville; "there is

a refinement which discovers itself by a quick perception of the feelings of others, a delicate observance of those feelings, a ready sympathy, a graceful surrender of our own wishes and preferences, as superior to mere refinement of manner, as a living breathing grace would be, to one that smiled on us only on canvass. But this refinement will be found only in connexion with the highest principle — "

" While that which is the mere offspring and creature of cultivation, as Sir Henry observed, serves to give a monotonous aspect to society," said Constance. " Constant friction and attrition not only rub off all rough angles and asperities, but every little characteristic streak and spot is obliterated."

" If you quarrel with the effects of cultivation, at what point would you stop?" enquired Mrs. Grenville. " You would not, like Lord Monboddo and Rousseau, send us back to the savage state for happiness."

" No, not quite so far," answered Constance; " but I can imagine a state of society extremely delightful, equally removed from barbarism and luxury; from which the rudeness of savage ignorance, and the cold and heartless forma-

lities of modern life, would be alike excluded. Now St. Pierre, in his tale of Paul and Virginia, gives an enchanting picture of such a state."

"The general effect and colouring of the picture is enchanting," said Mrs. Grenville. "Virginia weaving garlands by the side of Paul, beneath the shade of the banana, counting the flight of hours by the shadows of the trees, and of years by their growth, is highly poetical and captivating; but then there are details that dissolve the spell — she washed the linen, cooked the dinner, and could neither read nor write — serious drawbacks in my estimation of felicity."

"She only did what the royal Nausicaë and the noble Achilles did before her," observed Constance, laughing.

"Oh! the dignity of these precedents is unquestionable," returned Mrs. Grenville; "their happiness, perhaps, rather less so. Why, indeed, should we imagine it to have been more vivid or more permanent than our own? The senses were awake to enjoyment, the passions keenly alive to excitation, and the intellectual powers comparatively dormant. Now, next to

the hallowed delights of devotion, and the exercise of the tender charities of life, the cultivation and expansion of the intellect open the richest source of enjoyment. Of this rich source, how little did they taste!"

"Their intellectual pleasures, though less enlarged," observed Sir Henry, "were perhaps more intense. Those of imagination, for instance, are certainly more vivid in that state of society than in any other. In these metaphysical, mathematical, logical days, imagination is fettered, and crippled. There is none of the dimness and haze so necessary to the mysterious effect of its enchantments; reason and science have seized the potent wizard; and in their withering grasp the wand is broken, the incantation powerless. In these 'evil times,' we have but a faint notion of the effects of poetry upon our ruder ancestors; the rapture, the ecstasy, the keen emotion, the delicious illusion — at any rate the pleasures of imagination were theirs in all their force and vividness."

"Yes, but not in their beauty and delicacy," replied Mrs. Grenville. "What we have lost in intensity, we have gained in tenderness;

besides I am not convinced, that, because our enjoyment is more strictly intellectual, it is less complete. If the pages of Homer have ceased to convulse the physical frame, they have not ceased to electrify the mind — if the song of the bard no longer plucks the sword from the scabbard, it still kindles the glow of patriotism."

"You seem to have thought much on the subject," said Sir Henry; "I wish we might be favoured with the result of your reflections in black and white —"

"Oh! do indulge us, my dear mother," said Constance; "the impression will be so much stronger, we shall soon become converts."

"You will not suffer us to plead in vain, I hope," added Sir Henry, placing a writing-desk before her.

"No, not now," replied Mrs. Grenville. "I cannot write at the word of command, and in public; but if you will join our tea-party to-morrow, I will try by that time to set my thoughts in order."

CHAP. XI.

" On a tort cependant de craindre la supériorité de l'esprit et de l'âme : elle est très-morale cette supériorité ; car tout comprendre rend très-indulgent, et sentir profondement inspire une grande bonté." MAD. DE STAEL.

—— " Enlarged by thee,
She springs aloft, with elevated pride,
Above the tangling mass of low desires,
That bind the fluttering crowd ; and, angel-wing'd,
The heights of science and of virtue gains,
Where all is calm and clear ; —

And hither fancy sent her kindest dreams,
Raising a world of gayer tinct and grace ;
O'er which were shadowy cast Elysian gleams,
That play'd in waving lights from place to place,
And shed a roseate smile on Nature's face."
THOMSON.

SIR HENRY failed not to keep his appointment at the tea-table. The ' bubbling and loud hissing urn' had hardly disappeared when he claimed the fulfilment of Mrs. Grenville's promise ; and the trio gathered round an open window, where, amidst the hush, and stillness,

and dewy odours of evening, they listened to the following pages.

"You have requested my assistance in deciding whether refinement is or is not conducive to happiness. Before we enter the arena, allow me a moment's pause on the threshold. This happiness, so much talked of, so eagerly sought, so little understood, is it indeed a dream? When will man be persuaded to seek it in the narrow path where alone it is to be found — to be content with it in the degree in which alone it can be tasted on earth! Its attainment has been, in all ages, and in every state of society, the ultimate object of human effort. The Epicurean, who bids us pluck, ere it withers, the quickly-fading flower, and the Stoic, who teaches us that pain is not an evil, have pursued it by different paths, but with the same solicitous eagerness. The rapidity of youth, however, and the steadiness of age, prove equally unsuccessful; the coy fugitive still eludes the vigilance of pursuit, and mocks the vanity of human wishes. But though the present infelicity of man is acknowledged without hesitation, there exists a persuasion that, in some golden period, happiness was not so

unattainable — that in the days of other years her footsteps were traced with ease and success through the paths of simplicity.

"Delightful as it is to turn from the thousand painful realities by which we are surrounded, to the contemplation of a picture presenting only images of purity and peace, it is yet necessary to guard against the chimeras of imagination, and the delusive influence of romantic and exaggerated description.

"That the age of primeval simplicity was the age of happiness and virtue, has never yet been proved; and the actual state of those nations where civilisation is yet in its infancy, by no means favours the idea. The savage wandering in his native woods, is not free from the agitation of passion, and the tumult of desire. It is true that he does not ingeniously multiply the sources either of his joys or sorrows, but their very concentration increases their impetuosity — as a river which glides with beautiful placidity through flowery meads, "giving a gentle kiss to every sedge it doth encounter," foams in noisy turbulence when pent in between rugged rocks and narrow boundaries.

" But to pursue this interesting subject more methodically, if indeed a lady's pen can be methodical, I must first give you my own definition of refinement.

" A union of elegance, purity, and delicacy, appears to me to constitute refinement; these shedding their combined influence upon the mind, the morals, and the manners, produce that peculiar blending of elevation and softness, which designates a refined character. It comprehends a taste for whatever is beautiful in art, touching in nature, or sublime in morality. It adds loveliness to virtue, grace to benevolence, tenderness to friendship, and dignity to love. It excludes from its fair domain, the sternness that repels, the coarseness that disgusts, and the voluptuousness that enfeebles. Distinct as it is from luxury, it is not unfrequently confounded with it; but the one diffuses heavenly fragrance, the other breathes pestilential vapours. Refinement with seraph-like purity, elevates the mind to heaven; luxury, with potent spells, enchains it to earth.

" I am aware that there is a degree of refinement, which, in the present constitution of society, is calculated to throw us at a distance from

felicity. The perceptions of the mind, like the senses of the body, may be stimulated till they shrink with disgust from all that is not rare and exquisite; till they can endure only exotic softness, and rich perfumes; but I do not think this excess sufficiently common to be dangerous. Now and then, in the path of life, we meet with those whose imagination is ascendant over their judgment, who indulge in the delicious reveries of fancy, and permit her pencil to paint in celestial hues, scenes and characters which do not exist in nature. After having traversed an Eden of their own creation, and gathered a thousand thornless roses, they return to the sober realities of life with disgust, and droop, like the tender mimosa, at the gentlest touch; but this is not one of the most frequent or most formidable errors of human weakness.

"In a world confessedly rugged, it is indeed dangerous to be tremblingly alive in every pore; and therefore I am very willing to grant that even refinement must have its limits; but this is all I can concede: its pleasures are so exalted, and so exquisite, that the dangers to which it exposes us, become like dust in the balance.

" The fair face of nature, which is gazed upon without emotion by the ignorant rustic, or voluptuous sensualist, presents to the refined and contemplative mind a thousand harmonious combinations; such a mind ranges from object to object with delighted rapidity, one moment contemplating with ravishment the sublime spectacle of ten thousand worlds moving in majestic harmony, — another tracing the finger of Omnipotence even in the gossamer that glitters in the morning ray and is chased away by the passing breeze. It beholds the whole creation tinged with beautiful and ever-varying colours. Nature becomes 'all beauty to the eye, all music to the ear.'

" Let us follow it in its hours of solitude, in those moments when, wrapt in contemplation, it kneels at the very throne of Deity! — 'Who can calculate the degree of felicity enjoyed by Newton, when he shut out the world, to range through the universe? — Of Locke, when he closed the door on the vulgar crowd, that he might open his soul to the bright Intelligences that visited him from above? — Of Milton, when he traversed the midnight woods of Ludlow, to mark,'

> ' The spiritual creatures that walk
> The earth unseen, both when we
> Wake and when we sleep.'

Nor need we fear that these exalted gratifications will unfit us for the common duties of society — refinement is as intimately connected with virtue as with intellect. By heightening the delicacy of our perceptions, it increases our nice estimation of duty, and that beautiful tenderness of conscience, which teaches us to endure any thing rather than our own rebuke, and to exult in accomplishing the task assigned us on earth.

" But to produce its most lovely fruits in the beauty of perfection, refinement must be blended with Christian principle; by which, alone, its exuberances are restrained, and its limits precisely defined. In characters unhappily deficient in this principle, or where it is weak and theoretical, we see refinement degenerating into sickly fastidiousness, or the morbid indulgence of unchastised feeling. In the seclusion which it loves, it unconsciously becomes a worshipper of self. As the beautiful groves of the ancient heathen were polluted with unholy rites, while the solemn shade seemed to breathe of sanctity,

so, amidst mysterious musings and luxurious solitudes, the refined mind bows down to an idol from which it would turn with disgust, if seen in its own appropriate temple, and surrounded by coarse and vulgar votaries.

"Free, perhaps, from the restless vanity which hungers for the applause of the world; yet undue self-estimation induces the man of refinement to despise the suffrages of any part of it: — he has climbed to a height so airy and fantastic, that he looks down upon his fellow-men as a race of pigmies. Let him descend to the plain, and measure his intellectual stature and strength with theirs: he will find equals with whom he may grapple as an antagonist, or coalesce as an ally; and he will form a more modest and less erroneous judgment. It is under the controlling influence of that principle, which maintains an eternal war with selfishness, in all its forms, which renders the claims of duty, under every variety of circumstance, not only paramount, but dear, — which hallows the motives and purposes of the human heart, that refinement gives to the character all its inexpressible grace and beautiful finish.

"Such refinement is not peculiar to the 'perfumed chambers of the great.' Though it has no sympathy with the coarse pleasures of the sensualist, yet it can take the most lively interest in simple and homely joy. It resists the pressure of adverse circumstances, and can live and flourish amidst the bleak air of poverty.

"If from the high and holy principle of Christianity refinement derives strength and beauty; in its turn it invests the fair form of piety with a more attractive loveliness: banishing all harshness and austerity, it mingles a graceful courtesy with the simple exercise of Christian love — without offending, it awes by gentle dignity — without temporising, it attracts by a winning sweetness.

"It has been alleged that refinement, by quickening sensibility, enlarges the sphere of misery; but does it not infinitely enlarge the sphere of happiness? The sorrow of sympathy brings with it its own rich reward in the delicious consolation it imparts to others, when, with indescribable grace, it soothes the grief it cannot chase away, and pours balm into the wounds which it cannot heal. Who would barter the

privilege of weeping with those who weep, for all the selfish security of indifference !

" If, then, refinement stimulates the mind in the pursuit of knowledge, and the heart in the attainment of virtue and the exercise of benevolence, it must contribute to happiness ; for, from springs so pure, what but happiness can flow ?

" Shall we, then, with the sternness of stoicism, reject that which diffuses an enchanting grace over the common courtesies of society, and softens and embellishes our earthly path ?—Or, shall we exchange its pure delights for sensual gratifications, or for those insipid pursuits which render life tedious as a twice-told tale ?"

When Mrs. Grenville ceased to read, Sir Henry's animated thanks were echoed by Constance ; and she exclaimed,

" Who could quarrel, my dear mother, with the refinement which you have advocated ; but where — oh ! where is it to be found ?— In some bright little island, as yet only visible in a poet's dream ?"

" No," resumed Mrs. Grenville : " it is to be found diffusing a charm over every-day life, and adding strength and beauty to the dear ties of home and kindred."

A pleasant discussion succeeded, and the evening had long closed in before Sir Henry took his leave. As he pursued his way to the Manor House, the moon shone brightly in the deep blue of the Heavens —

> " The starlight dews, all silently,
> Their tears of love instill'd into
> The drooping flowers."

He looked around, and, with a feeling of deep and quiet enjoyment, thought in the words of the poet —

> " How beautiful is night!
> A dewy freshness fills the silent air —
> No mist obscures, nor cloud, nor speck, nor stain
> Breaks the serene of heaven;
> In full-orbed glory, yonder moon divine
> Rolls through the dark blue depths: —
> How beautiful is night! "

After a few moments of admiring enthusiasm, his mind reverted to those from whom he had just parted; and he found himself dwelling with considerable interest on the peculiarities of the character of Constance, and upon the great advantages she must derive from the influence of such a mind as Mrs. Grenville's.

Constance certainly differed materially from that large class of young ladies with whom Sir Henry was familiar; who, by the usual routine of education, are drilled and paraded into a uniformity of perfection: — who move gracefully, speak winningly, think a little, and smile a great deal, especially upon men of family and fortune. He had been accustomed to see the face of beauty dimple and sparkle at his approach — to find the ear riveted in mute attention to his remarks; but he soon discovered that Constance had no desire whatever to win, or to be won: — when she listened to him, it was the sentiment, not the speaker, with which her mind was engaged. Her own opinions were expressed with frank simplicity, and with perfect indifference as to the effect she produced. Abstractedly considered, perhaps, this might require regulation; but, for Sir Henry, it had the piquancy and charm of novelty.

From these reflections he gradually fell into a reverie, in which visions of future and distant years floated indistinctly before him — scenes of domestic peace and joy, not indeed very clearly defined, but looking soft and bright in the perspective of fancy.

This fit of musing lasted till he reached the Manor House, and he then recollected with pleasure that the family were engaged to dine on the following day with Mrs. Grenville.

CHAP. XII.

" Our intellectual ore must shine,
Not slumber, idly, in the mine.
Let Education's moral mint
The noblest images imprint;
Let Taste her curious touchstone hold,
To try if standard be the gold;
But 'tis thy commerce, *Conversation*,
Must give it use by circulation:
That noblest commerce of mankind,
Whose precious merchandise is *Mind!*"

MRS. MORE.

MRS. Grenville, in receiving the Lennox family as her guests, paid them the compliment of believing that they could forego, without regret, their dinner of three courses, their service of silver, and train of servants, &c. She made no vain attempt at equality of elegance in the arrangements of her table,—they were neither costly nor luxurious, but graced by the charm of hospitality, and the ease of good breeding. Nothing could be more cheerful than the dinner;—no

cold formality chained the tongue, no freezing ceremony cramped the powers of the mind. The ladies were sufficiently amused to linger a little over the dessert, and the gentlemen were gallant enough to acknowledge this favour, by joining them early in the drawing-room.

Lady Lennox had been put in quiet possession of a sofa, and was talking in a low voice to Mrs. Grenville.

Percy drew near the tea-table, over which Constance was presiding, and, dexterously gliding in between her and Caroline, exclaimed—

"I vote myself your aid-de-camp, this evening, Miss Grenville: — the tea is to come under my jurisdiction. Why that look of discomposure, my dear Caroline? Have I interrupted your vows of eternal friendship?—You forget that I am longing to breathe my own."

"You could have breathed them as well on the other side, I suppose," said Caroline.

"No, I don't like a divided empire," replied Percy. "You have not studied mathematics, my dear child, or you would know that the whole is greater than a part; — but what sweet theme, what gentle discourse, have I interrupted?—Was

it about love, or friendship, or long waists, or the Waverley novels?"

"We shall make no confessions, indeed," said Constance.

"Cruel! to deprive me even of a ray of reflected light;" returned Percy. "But you are systematically cruel to-day. I have scarcely yet recovered your barbarity of this morning."

"Indeed;—what barbarity?" said Constance. "My conscience is remarkably dull and quiescent on the subject."

"Why, the barbarity of leaving me to wander about in the most disconsolate state, while you shut yourself up with Dilworth's spelling-book, and that little ragged regiment of dunces. Pray did you accomplish teaching them a b *ab* at last? —for when I made my bow, it seemed a hopeless achievement; —and it was such a piece of unnecessary cruelty too.— Could not any old crone in the village have drummed away, instead of you?"

"Perhaps Miss Grenville does not approve the system of fulfilling duties by proxy," said Sir Henry.

"I do not approve such a system, certainly," said Constance, "though I am now and then tempted to adopt it; — but I thought," added

she, turning to Percy, "you meant to console yourself with your pencil.—Pray did you finish your sketch?—It was very promising when I saw it last."

"It is a vile botch now," replied Percy; "you withdrew your inspiring presence, and the sunny landscape faded into gloom directly."

"Oh! of course," said Constance, laughing—

> 'Nor rose, nor wall-flower, nor smart gilly-flower,
> Nor lark, linnet, nor all the finches of the grove,
> Could joy afford!'

"Your woe, no doubt, was quite as heart-rending as the wretched Tilburina's!"

"Oh! laugh me not to scorn, fair maid," said Percy, in the same mock heroic tone.

Sir Henry, who appeared to be engaged in turning over a volume of designs at the other end of the room, was secretly marvelling at the ease with which Percy managed to appropriate Constance as a companion.—He was constantly ruralising, or botanising, or sketching, or reading with her.—Caroline, indeed, was always of the party, and Percy's admiration was far too openly expressed to be suspected of the least tinge of love;—but to claim Constance as a

sort of property during his stay at the Manor House — to win her gayest smiles, to whisper to her with that confidential air, was, in Sir Henry's opinion, strange presumption.

"Pray do you really intend to make the tea?" said Constance to Percy.—"I think you had better not."

"That insinuation, Miss Grenville, is not to be borne. — You doubt my ability," said Percy. —"Why, was not my tea the wonder and delight of all the men of Trinity? — Did it not inspire the poet, and stimulate the man of science?"

"Do pray, my dear Percy, have pity upon our nerves," — said Lady Lennox, — "I am sure you intend to murder sleep — such a quantity of green tea!"

"Why, my dear mother, I hope you have nothing to say against that most delicious of potations; — you might as well quarrel with the sparkling waters of Helicon. —Thanks to green tea, Charles Grahame finished off his magnificent prize poem; — thanks to green tea, your son Percy was senior wrangler.—My dear madam," continued he, addressing Mrs. Grenville, "you should have a Rockingham teapot; — it

is impossible to do justice to my powers with this short, round, flat article; — height — height, my dear madam, is as essential to a teapot as to a grenadier. — Unluckily, Miss Grenville, you are not a chemical, philosophical young lady, or you would understand all this in a minute. I hope," continued he, in a lower tone, " you do not intend to desert me again to-morrow. — Consider how soon I shall be obliged to forsake these green abodes — these woods and vales, and be shut up amidst smoke and gas, and parchments, with dull men, and dull folios."

" What, does not the ' full flow of London talk' console you for the loss of fawns and dryads, and leafy bowers?" enquired Constance.

" Oh ! do not mock me by such words," exclaimed Percy. — " You are dreaming of those golden days, when wits congregated to eat and drink, and be delightful; — but intellectual banquets are not at all the fashion now-a-days: — we meet to eat, drink, and digest."

" This does not accord with all we hear of the intellectual activity of the present age," observed Constance.

" Why, after all, this activity is a calculating activity," replied Percy. — " Mind is now con-

sidered a sort of marketable article, valuable only in exchange for solid gold; — we do not throw it away in society."

"Your assertions are too sweeping, Percy," said Sir Henry; — "other feelings may check the full *flow of talk*, of which Miss Grenville speaks. — I have known persons, silent and stately in company, who have been the charm and delight of the family circle."

"It is a most abominable and impertinent fraud on society, then," said Mr. Herbert. — "I would forgive a man quite as readily for cheating me of my money, as for cheating me of my social enjoyment."

"But do you allow nothing for humility?" enquired Constance. "Is the silence of diffidence to be confounded with that of pride or stupidity?"

"To every thing there is a season," replied Mr. Herbert; — "there is an age, when even *mauvaise honte* may be tolerated. — We are content that a girl in her teens should blush and listen more than she talks; but, after twenty, those pretty automatons, who only fill a chair, and move gracefully in a quadrille, are not to be endured."

"But, indeed, my dear uncle," exclaimed Caroline, in an appealing tone — "you should make some allowance for real constitutional shyness and timidity, even after the privileged age; I am sure the penalty it inevitably pays is sufficiently heavy. — Oh! what such persons do suffer in being compassionately *drawn out*, as it is called, in company by some very agreeable person; — the martyrdom of being applied to by looks, and appealed to by words, for an opinion, when they are too much embarrassed either to form or express one; — the consciousness of looking and being stupid and disagreeable. — Oh! you should have some pity!"

"Pity!" echoed Mr. Herbert. — "Why, yes, — as I should pity any distortion or imbecility of body; — but then I consider it a defect, and one which, like physical defects, may be counteracted by exertion and perseverance."

"Oh! never — never," exclaimed Caroline.

"Ah! the sensitive plant has its place in the creation, as well as the oak," said Constance, with an affectionate smile at Caroline; — "and surely the silence of modesty requires no defence."

Mr. Herbert seemed inclined to controvert the proposition. He declared that modesty, with all its pretty and peculiar graces, was lovely enough in its way; but then he wished to hear the soft silver tones of her voice. — Modesty, with her finger on her lips, he thought, after all, a very tiresome sort of a personage.

"But you know, my dear sir," said Mrs. Grenville, "the Roman orator declared that there was not only an art, but an eloquence in silence; — besides, I do not think that we can complain of a deficiency of talkers in society, but that, upon the whole, we talk so little to the purpose. — How is it, considering the extent and variety of cultivation now enjoyed, that conversation turns to so little account in the way of improvement? — that even the well-informed and thinking part of the world are so frequently content to be frivolous and common-place?"

"The evil may be traced to various sources," replied Mr. Herbert: — "to indolence, to prejudice, to folly. — Men of sense are frequently indolent; they come into society to relax, as they call it — that is, to be idle; — therefore, they talk about *nothing*. Women of sense are often

timid; they shrink from display; they dread to be stigmatised as *blue*;—therefore, *they* talk about *nothing*. Young men and maidens have frequently their hearts full of love, and their heads full of nonsense; — therefore, *they* talk about *nothing*."

The young men and maidens clustered round Mr. Herbert in self-defence. — He was at liberty to presume what he pleased about their hearts; — to that they were heroically indifferent; but as to their heads, they would not permit them to be so scandalously slandered: — they begged to be informed what subjects were to be included in his sweeping term *nothing?* — Whether books and literature, love and friendship, poetry, painting, and music, were to be thus included? — Certainly, these subjects might not be so important as the national debt, the state of Ireland, or the severity of the penal laws; upon which, elderly sages and middle-aged men wasted so much dull good sense; — but if not equally important, they were equally interesting, and called the mind rather more into play.

Mr. Herbert begged pardon, but still stood on the defensive. It had been his lot not unfrequently to listen to, or rather to overhear,

especially from a female conclave, lengthy dissertations upon subjects still lighter than love, and poetry, and sweet sounds, — dissertations upon gauzes and ribbands, feathers and flowers, long sleeves and short; a style of conversation, which made him at the moment acquiesce, very reluctantly, in that ungallant definition, — "Woman is an animal delighting in finery."

"Well!" said Constance, "the most frivolous conversation of the most frivolous persons is to me far more endurable than the *cant* of those very superior people who talk for effect."

"But it never happens, my dear Constance," replied Mrs. Grenville; "very superior people are precisely those who do not talk for effect. In the course of my experience, I never yet met with a really powerful and extraordinary mind, that was not sportive and simple. The riches of such minds are indeed discovered in conversation; as in passing through a fertile country, the flowers and fruit that spring up spontaneously, delight and refresh the traveller; but are never displayed, nor marshalled like exotics in a hothouse to win our wonder and admiration."

"I ought not, perhaps," returned Constance, "to have said superior people, but those who have the reputation of being very superior; — now there is Mrs. Burlington, who piques herself upon her intellectual powers, and upon having a *soul*. How I do dread her *uncommon*-place way of talking — she is so oppressively sensible, so afflictingly well informed; — never did she, with the honest frankness of the poet, 'confess fearless, a soul that does not always think.'"

"And what is it that destroys the charm of this lady's conversation? — that makes even the variety of a well-informed mind fatiguing?" said Mrs. Grenville: — "*Egotism*, and self-reference. If Mrs. Burlington could be persuaded to forget *Mrs. Burlington*, she would be charming — but her friends and admirers have described her to herself as so very *delightful*, that she acquiesces complacently in the notion; and, like a favourite singer, fancies she has a weight of fame to support. She, therefore, is but a performer; and one who, instead of regaling the ear with a simple melody, overpowers us with the tricks and brilliancy of finished execution. Hers, is egotism of a peculiar character — the egotism of *pretension*. Perhaps few faults de-

teriorate conversation so much as this said egotism."

"Yes," said Mr. Herbert, "it is curious to trace its various shades and sources. Besides the indolent and stupid (niggards, who contribute little or nothing to the fund of conversation) there are three classes of monopolists who infest society: — the Egotists — the Prosers — and the Gossips. — There is the egotism of *pretension* — the egotism of *vanity* — the egotism of *pride* — and the egotism of *selfishness*. The egotism of *pretension* is the most select in its subjects — they are generally worth talking of; — it offends rather against good taste than good sense; but it produces the same uneasy sensations that we should feel in walking with a person mounted on stilts — there is no going arm in arm with them, in free, familiar, delightful intercourse; — the mind, however, though not at its ease, is kept awake and employed. The egotism of *vanity* is neither select in it subjects, nor imposing as to manner; — we feel less constrained under its influence, and more inclined to laugh in our sleeve. — The egotism of *pride* is less patiently endured than any other; because it is not only insufferably dull, but it outrages the self-

love of its auditors; with singular inconsistency, while it appears to set them completely at nought, it is solicitous to secure their wonder and homage. It produces the worst effects in conversation; not only from its paramount and dogmatising spirit, but from the train of unkindly feelings, it puts into action. Every one is inclined to dispute, or resent the assumption. — 'I am Sir Oracle, and when I ope' my mouth let no dog bark.' — The egotism of *selfishness* is still more wearisome, though, perhaps, less irritating; but if it does not wound our self-love, it excites disgust, and deadens sympathy. — It checks the flow, and troubles the stream, of conversation, by a constant recurrence to its own little circle of cares and feelings: — often have I seen the golden thread rudely snapt asunder in this way — the discussion of an interesting subject broken off to make way for endless doubts, and fears, and conjectures about nothing. It is provoking when a vein of precious ore is just discovered, the working of which would have yielded abundant treasure, to have it suddenly choked up by mere rubbish. This species of egotism is restless and abstracted in general conversation, deriving from

it no improvement, and contributing nothing to its enjoyment."

Mr. Herbert paused — and there was silence for a few moments through the circle, but it was the silence of fixed and pleased attention, therefore not ungratifying.

"There is one feature of egotism," said Mrs. Grenville, pursuing the conversation, "which you have not noticed: — nine times out of ten, the egotist is a proser to boot."

"Ah! the *Prosers!*" exclaimed Constance; "how they do abound in society! — We meet them at every corner; and what excites my surprise is, the apparent unconsciousness with which they commit their devastations on our time and patience."

"I believe there is a great deal of unconscious prosing in conversation," said Mrs. Grenville; "and practised by persons who are capable of better things, who prose chiefly from habit. These differ from the dull stupid prosers."

"Oh! a proser must be dull," interrupted Constance: "dulness is the very essence of all prosing."

"But the proser, from mere dulness of intellect," continued Mrs. Grenville, "is incorri-

gible — the case is desperate — mind cannot be supplied. Now the proser, from defective taste and habit, is not in so irretrievable a state."

"No, the staple commodity is different," observed Mr. Herbert: — "in the one case, a good raw material is marred by the mode in which it is wrought up; — in the other, both material and workmanship are equally worthless."

"The effect, however, is much the same," said Constance: — "both are skilled in conjuring up the demon of *ennui*, and in torturing their unhappy victims."

"I have known very clear-headed, intelligent people insensibly betrayed into prosiness," said Mrs. Grenville; "and tedious, prolix, and unnecessarily minute, even from their love of accuracy."

"Ah! but this can only happen with second-rate minds," said Sir Henry; "there must be want of grasp and vigour: — such men, for instance, as Dr. Johnson, Burke, Lord Chatham, Byron, Scott, could never prose."

"Nor endure prosers," added Constance.

"Dr. Johnson would not endure a proser," said Mrs. Grenville; "we have his treatment of one upon record: — but there are great men, I

should think, who would endure from urbanity, though not from temperament."

"To listen with patience to a proser is, in my opinion, a most unjustifiable waste of virtue," said Constance, laughing: "really life is too short for sacrifices of such questionable utility."

"Oh! I am persuaded the effect is extremely pernicious," added Percy: "patient listeners are not merely sufferers; they are accessaries; they keep up the delusive self-complacency of the proser, and establish the habit."

"Who knows the good that might be effected by a discovery of undisguised distaste and honest weariness?" said Constance.

"It would probably irritate without reforming," returned Mrs. Grenville; "and indeed there are many circumstances, in which not only good breeding, but good principle requires us to listen with patient kindness to the most inveterate proser."

"I am sure it is the dullest duty in the whole catalogue," exclaimed Constance; besides, I think the claim on our patience in this way is extremely limited; for instance, if we were unhappy enough to be afflicted with prosy parents; why, of course, it would be a duty to listen

to them with the patience of Griselda; but the prosiness of a far-off cousin or a mere acquaintance is quite a distinct affair. We are surely at liberty to look the truth on such occasions, though not to speak it."

"No," replied Mrs. Grenville; "we are not at liberty to wound the feelings of any human being, when, by a little forbearance, it can be avoided."

"Feelings?" echoed Constance, laughing; "pray, my dear mother, do not talk of feelings. Have they a single spark of pity for their auditors? And would it not be kind and useful to awaken their sympathies? to rouse them to a sense of their cruelty?"

"But they have no sympathies," said Percy: "they are such a self-loving, self-occupied set."

"Not invariably," said Mrs. Grenville: "they are often good-natured, harmless, tasteless persons, with qualities that entitle them to patient respect, though not to willing attention."

"The success of the honest plan would be doubtful, to be sure," said Percy: "the prosers are a most invulnerable race; slow, and sure, and impenetrable as the tortoise, they plod on in dull unwearied steadiness; their com-

panions halting far behind in hopeless weariness."

"The good effects of the charitable system, as it regards ourselves," said Mrs. Grenville, "are far less doubtful. Society should not be considered as a theatre, in which we are to be constantly excited or amused, but rather as a school, where talents are to be improved, and virtues exercised; where we sometimes con a dull page, and sometimes enjoy a happy holiday. If our keen sense of mental enjoyment were always gratified, we should become mental epicures; and starve because a feast is not always at our command. The best-disciplined minds learn to be content with common fare, while they retain the most lively relish for a more dainty banquet."

"Yes; but though we are to be contented with common fare," returned Constance, "it requires Spartan virtue to endure the coarse bread, and black broth, that are sometimes forced upon us."

"If it be only unpalatable, not unwholesome," observed Mrs. Grenville, "it is courteous and kind sometimes to partake of it without appa-

rent disgust: I certainly would not recommend it as daily fare," added she, laughing.

"There is a class who present rather a contrast to the prosers," said Percy — "the systematic oppositionists — wranglers and janglers — scattered about in society; who, without dissenting in manners, or forms, from the world in general (for whom they have a very sufficient reverence), happen to differ in taste and opinion with every individual with whom they come in contact."

"Yes," replied Mr. Herbert, "and are consequently betrayed into maintaining propositions the most singular, and opinions the most absurd and contradictory. This habit arises sometimes from perversity of temper, and not unfrequently from mere vanity; from the desire such persons feel of being considered original — thinkers for themselves. In this case, the opposition is good-humoured, and apparently unconscious; in the other, it is peevish and captious; but in both it is uniform."

"Then there are the resolute disputants," said Percy, with a sly glance at Mr. Herbert, "who enjoy an argument as an epicure does a

feast — or rather seize upon it as a starving man would on food."

"I should be sorry," said Mrs. Grenville, "if these were banished from society: the wrestling of powerful and well-ordered minds is always interesting; especially if it be good-tempered, gentlemanly fencing, where strength and skill can be displayed, and amicable feeling still retained."

"You have not discussed the third class of monopolists, sir," said Constance, looking up at Mr. Herbert: "the gossips, I hope, are not to be passed over in silence."

"The gossips," returned Mr. Herbert, "include, I fear, a much larger proportion of talkers, and consume a larger proportion of time, than could be imagined without a fair investigation of the subject. — Of the busy, scandal-loving, ill-natured gossips, I hope there are not many specimens: — but it is idle, frivolous, little-minded gossip that is the most abundant. It is a weed running over the fair field of conversation; not absolutely noxious in itself, perhaps, but covering, and wasting a great part of the ground."

"Yes, and not unfrequently interfering with

the expansion of many a flower, that would otherwise be found there," said Mrs. Grenville. "I conclude, however," added she, "that this fault is made over to us. — You believe, I suppose, in common with most of your sex, that true, legitimate, thorough gossip is exclusively a feminine art?"

"Chiefly; but not exclusively," replied Mr. Herbert. — "I have met with some choice specimens among my own sex; many of whom, however, are more taciturn than yours, without being less frivolous."

"The ladies, then, would still have your suffrage," said Mrs. Grenville; "for I believe you would prefer even frivolous chit-chat to stupid silence."

"Why, yes; a wilderness overgrown with verdure, though it be good for nothing, is better than a sandy desert."

"Tolerant as you are," said Mrs. Grenville, "I must enter my protest against gossiping; it is morally and intellectually mischievous; it wastes time incalculably; this, to a responsible being, is no light evil; it injures the mind, which, by perpetually stooping, becomes dwarfish and

contracted. The gossip of idle inconsideration is often as pernicious in its effects as the gossip of actual malignity; the turpitude, indeed, is not so great, but the mischief is as real. I have known injurious prejudices excited by opinions hastily formed; perhaps on *hearsay* evidence, and unwarrantably expressed. Nothing can be more infectious than a prejudice; it spreads with the rapidity of a plague; and the evil to the individual who is its victim, is incalculable and incurable. — I have observed amiable persons who fall into this error: — they would be shocked and humiliated to be convicted of evil speaking; and yet a great deal that they say can be classed under this head. The fact is, that duty alone can warrant the expression of an unfavourable opinion; and then it should be given with every qualification that charity can suggest or advance, consistently with truth."

"But do we not meet with every shade and variety of character in society, my dear mother? and are we to greet all with a smile of indiscriminating courtesy?" asked Constance. — "To wear a mask over the features of the mind, appears to me little and disingenuous."

"The charity which I desire to see cherished," replied Mrs. Grenville, "does not at all interfere with accuracy of discrimination, or soundness of judgment; it does not dull or deaden the perceptions; it does not warp the understanding; but it prevents all premature conclusions, all harsh interpretations. — While alive to the ridiculous, the grotesque, or absurd, it dismisses them all with a passing smile; and it so modulates the feelings, and softens the manners, as to produce an harmonious effect in society."

"Yes, yes; much might be done," said Mr. Herbert, "if we could persuade people to live up to their principles, and talk up to their understanding; — but we are content, like the Athenians, to know what is good, without being careful to practise it. — We are content with the consciousness of intellectual ability, but not half careful enough to exercise it."

"I think," said Mrs. Grenville, "that, without pedantry or parade, the tone of conversation might be insensibly raised, if the energies of the mind were not frittered away, in paltry discussions on what is merely external and superficial. In society, this practice might be discounte-

nanced, not by offensive assumption, but by good-humoured raillery, or by the quiet rebuke of disapproving silence; and social intercourse, which is one of the most delightful privileges of social beings, might be made, by a little good management, one of our richest sources of improvement."

"But this good management," said Sir Henry, "how difficult it is! To take the lead in conversation, — to set the tone gracefully, — requires such peculiar address."

"Why, there is an intellectual superiority so decided and unquestionable, that we immediately pay it the willing tribute of delighted homage," returned Mrs. Grenville; "and such minds alone, are privileged to take the lead in society, — such persons, when they silence folly, and check presumption, are in their vocation, — it is their duty. — Even *satire* in their hands is a useful weapon; while with ordinary minds, it is like a fowling-piece in the hands of an urchin, not only useless, but mischievous. — This superiority is too rare, to interfere with the general equality of educated society, where the shades of intellect are just sufficiently diversified, to blend harmoniously."

" But if we select subjects really interesting, such as literature, or religion," said Constance, " we shall be found guilty, by a well-bred jury, of pedantry and fanaticism."

" Literature may be considered a very fair field," said Sir Henry; " but I think religious subjects can seldom be introduced with advantage."

" Alas! what reproach do you cast upon society, by that observation," said Mrs. Grenville. " Not that I think a crowded room a fit place for the discussion of religious opinions and feelings, — but in the family and social circle, where heart meets heart with boundless confidence, why should not the dearest theme of all be more frequently chosen?"

Percy began to fear that the subject, which had slided from gay to grave, was now deepening into the solemn, and dexterously contrived to separate the little knot of talkers.

" My dear Mrs. Grenville," exclaimed he, " we are quite merciless, — you will be tired to death, — you have been standing for the last hour!"

Every body was shocked; — Sir Henry led Mrs. Grenville to a sofa; — Percy carried off his

sister and Constance to the piano, and very soon nothing was to be heard, but "The chough and crow to roost are gone," — and the consequent exordium, — "Uprouse ye then, my merry, merry men," &c.

Light and lively flowed the strains, unchecked even by Mr. Herbert, who contrived, by a well-timed bravo, to display sufficient respect for the "Chough and crow," to play a hit at backgammon, and slide in one or two good anecdotes while the glee was performing. — Another, and another succeeded, till watches were consulted, and Percy was reluctantly convinced that "Time, the churl, had beckoned, and they must away, away."

CHAP. XIII.

" There is no accounting for the obliquities of temper: all we can do is to curb our own temper, and to bear with that of others." MRS. OPIE.

" Each in himself the means
Possessed to turn the bitter sweet, the sweet
To bitter. Hence, from out the self-same fount
One nectar drank, another draughts of gall;
Hence, from the self-same quarter of the sky,
One saw ten thousand angels look and smile,
Another saw as many demons frown;
One discord heard, where harmony inclined
Another's ear. The sweet was in the taste;
The beauty in the eye; and in the ear
The melody."

POLLOK.

" SUCH a treat for you, my dear mother! — A letter from cousin Frances!" said Constance, inspecting the address of one, which she handed to Mrs. Grenville. — " I am sure the very hand-writing looks out of temper. — Pray is she as much in good humour with the world as usual?"

continued she, as Mrs. Grenville folded up the letter.

" She is in good humour with you and me, at any rate," replied Mrs. Grenville, " for she intends paying us a visit next week."

" Indeed!" said Constance.

Now, a great deal is sometimes revealed by this little word; — perhaps there is scarcely any one, about which it is more necessary to say, — " Ecrivez-moi le ton." — There is a joyous, animated *indeed*, bespeaking delighted surprise; — the dull civil *indeed*, indicating joyless acquiescence; — the *indeed* of disappointment, and the *indeed* of indifference. — Time will develope the quality of the *indeed* just pronounced.

" Well! — poor Frances!" exclaimed Mrs. Grenville, " I am sure I shall be extremely glad to see her!"

" It is a proof of your unfailing, unconquerable benevolence, then, my dear mother. — Not to be extremely sorry, is the warmest state of feeling I can bring myself to."

" I hope we shall make her comfortable," — said Mrs. Grenville, in a doubtful accent, after musing a few minutes.

" When you have acquired the power of

working miracles, that hope will be reasonable, and realised, perhaps," observed Constance; — " but, where lives the gifted mortal, who could make cousin Frances feel, and acknowledge herself happy? — She used to bestow herself upon poor dear aunt Ellen for six weeks every summer, and I am sure her visits gave me a very lively idea of purgatory. I believe she would realise what Judge Jenkins said of John Lilburne — that 'if the world was emptied of all but himself, Lilburne would quarrel with John, and John with Lilburne.' — She is so ingenious a self-tormentor — so inveterate a grumbler — I am persuaded she has studied grumbling as an art, and piques herself on the attainment. — Never surely did any human being so thoroughly understand the theory and practice of discontent. — And then she mistakes her uncertain temper and inordinate self-love for the fastidiousness of a refined and delicate mind. — It is really too amusing."

" After all, she has some very good points in her character," said Mrs. Grenville. " She is capable of generous exertions and sacrifices, and her understanding is excellent. She has often very kind thoughts and feelings; — I have

not forgotten her coming to Dover to meet us, on our return from Italy, and all the comfortable arrangements she had made."

"But you know, my dear mother, people are to be estimated, as Johnson says, by the mass of character — 'a block of tin may have a grain of silver in it, but still it is *tin* — and a block of silver may have an alloy of tin, but still it is *silver*' — really we cannot be expected to admire the block of tin. — No, not all the magic of your benevolence can metamorphose cousin Frances into any thing but a very trying personage. — I dare say the very letter you hold in your hand is an illustration of all I have said. — Ah! that betraying smile."

"Why, it is much in the usual strain, indeed," said Mrs. Grenville; — "but judge for yourself," continued she, handing the letter to Constance.

To Mrs. Grenville.

"My dear Harriet,

"I have been suffering so much with nervous head-ache and depression for the last week or two, that I have not felt equal to the exertion of acknowledging your last kind letter, — not,

indeed, that such an omission can excite any regret in your mind. Surrounded, as you appear to be, by those in whom you take a lively interest, I cannot hope to live much in your remembrance. A sad chilling feeling attends the conviction, that I am of no importance to any human being; — I really believe, not a single creature in the world, would sleep less soundly, or eat and laugh less heartily, if I were out of it to-morrow. I am essential to no one. However, complaint is useless and degrading, and of *you* I have none to make — you are one of the very few — indeed, almost the only person, from whom I have received any thing like uniformity of kindness; and even you, would do vastly well, if I were a thousand miles off, — at New York or Nova Scotia.

" Warmth of heart, and feelings keenly sensitive, are but a pernicious gift after all. How often have the vivid feelings and sanguine expectations, with which I formed an intimacy, gradually changed into disappointment and disgust, from the heartless caprice I have experienced; — but I have done with friendship and intimacies for ever. In time I hope to learn to see every thing around me with cold indifference.

It is the only habit of mind, adapted to a world like this.

"You give a very animated description of your new abode and its neighbourhood, and I sincerely hope, you will there find the comfort you calculate upon, — if you do, your experience will be more fortunate than mine.

" Fairfield is as far as possible, from being in an improving state. Several new families have lately settled here — quite of a second-rate description — mere *parvenus*, full of vulgar importance. Of the old families, I see a little — and very little. They migrate at the pleasant season of the year, the only one, indeed, in which I have spirits to move; and come down when the days are dark and the evenings cold. Really it is a pity that some of those wise laws, enacted in Elizabeth's and James's time, are not enforced now; — there was some common sense left then. What mischiefs spring from this migratory system! However, I should personally gain little, if permanent residence became the fashion. My neighbours are quite of the common-place, uninteresting order; and a repetition of dull dinners and heavy evenings is any thing but desirable.

"I mean to indulge myself with a visit to Elton next week, if you can receive me.

"Give my love to Constance, and kind regards to Lady Lennox, — if, indeed, like many of my old friends, she has not made a point of forgetting me.

"When are we to have any summer? Now do not say that the thermometer was at 85 a little while ago — 'three hot days and a thunder storm,' — can there be a more accurate description of an English summer? We may forgive people for running away from such a climate, though it would be more to the purpose to run away from themselves.

"Ever sincerely yours,

"F. EGERTON."

"How characteristic!" exclaimed Constance, returning the letter: — "pray allow me to be as sorry as I please, that such a cloud is about to shed its gloom over Elton."

"Oh! it is not at all impossible that Frances may be very pleasant here. I have known her remarkably agreeable sometimes," added Mrs. Grenville.

"Few and short have been those times — I fear," said Constance.

"We were children together," observed Mrs. Grenville, "and for many years lived under the same roof; I shall always, therefore, take a warm interest in Frances; — she is just one of those unfortunate persons, who, by want of self-control, and self-discipline, discover to all the world the infirm parts of their character, and thus contrive to be less valued than they really deserve."

"How did it all happen?" enquired Constance. — "What evil genius presided over her destiny, and wrought the ill?"

"Her evil genius, was early independence," replied Mrs. Grenville. "Those who have only themselves to please, and all appliances, and means to boot, generally manage the matter remarkably ill. — Frances expected, and exacted too much. If she formed an intimacy, she was not satisfied with affectionate attention, — she required exclusive preference, — she must reign alone, and supreme, and like Cæsar, be first or nothing; — she made no allowance for the infinite variety of dispositions; the endless shades of character which society presents; — she ex-

pected demonstration from the reserved, and ardour from the cold. She was not content to be welcomed and approved; — she must be distinguished and paramount. Co-intimates and companions were with her competitors and rivals: — she was disposed to overwhelm her favourites with attentions, and then to wonder and feel angry, that they were not returned fourfold. From these mistakes, her intimacies, instead of ripening into friendships, after a few ague fits, generally passed from alienation to estrangement. With a warm heart and a good understanding, she has contrived to multiply enemies, and distance friends: — mortification has embittered her life, — disappointment soured a temper originally uncertain; and now, instead of looking on the sunny side of events and characters, she sees every thing in shade; — she runs away from society, not choosing to pay the current coin of little civilities and sacrifices required, — shuts herself up with her own prejudices, by her own fire-side, and then complains of being left alone."

"You speak of her understanding as excellent!" said Constance; "and I am sure so competent a judge cannot be mistaken: — how

strange then it is, that it seems to add so little to her usefulness and enjoyment. How often have I seen her waste the hours in comfortless indolence, and then complain that every body and every thing were dull and stupid."

"The energies of her heart and mind have been ill-directed, and capriciously exercised," returned Mrs. Grenville; "but there are starts of excellence, — occasional bursts of intellectual vigour, that serve to show the quality of the soil, and to make us regret the perversity and indolence which prevents its being turned to better account."

"Can we rate such characters very highly?" said Constance, warmly. — "Can they expect to live in the affections of those around them? — We are not called upon to consider the *whys* and *wherefores* of the case, — why they are what they are, or how different they might have been, — but to estimate them according to their actual value."

"But the spirit of charity must be very imperfectly cultivated, if these whys and wherefores are not kindly considered," said Mrs. Grenville.

"If, in an exhibition-room," continued Constance, "I see a figure that does not please me; coarse in execution, or distorted in attitude, it is idle to waste time in speculating upon the bad taste of the artist, or the defects of the figure; — my remedy is simply to refresh the eye by turning it immediately to other objects. — Neglect and alienation must and will be the portion of such characters."

"Yes, but where the tie of kindred exists, this must not be," said Mrs. Grenville. — "Society may, and will exercise its prerogative of retributive justice. — Those who do not think it worth while to cultivate social qualities, will be tolerated only by the friendly few, and totally avoided by the majority. — It is so; and, upon the whole, it is well that it should be so; — but where duty and consanguinity place us under the same roof, — around the same hearth —"

"Why then, duty and consanguinity place us in a very disagreeable situation," said Constance, laughing.

"And good principle, good feeling, and good policy, teach us to make the best of it," continued Mrs. Grenville.

"It is but dull work," returned Constance, impatiently. — "Cousin Frances is a person, who would travel from Dan to Beersheba in the journey of life, and 'cry all is barren;' but does she take the pains of planting a single flower on her way, or of cherishing and fostering the buds and blossoms that are scattered there? No, she ungratefully treads them under her feet; and their beauty and fragrance are alike wasted, both for herself and others."

"The best use we can make of such characters, is to exercise forbearance, and to double the vigilance with which we watch over our own weaknesses and peculiarities," observed Mrs. Grenville. — "Frances is not the only person of my acquaintance who is of a fastidious spirit, and somewhat disposed to quarrel with the world."

Constance coloured a little, and a pause of some minutes ensued. — "We must take care," said she, resuming the conversation, "to give timely notice to the neighbourhood of the approaching arrival; that if any unpardonable breach of etiquette should occur, the sin may not be on our heads."

"I will mention it at the Manor House, and at the Rectory, to-day," replied Mrs. Grenville,

" and if we can contrive to call on Mrs. Somers," added she, laughing, " our task will be ended."

" Yes, — we may feel quite certain that the news will travel round the village before sunset," observed Constance. " ' Mrs. Candour' herself would not diffuse it more effectually. — By the by, — what a contrast, the invulnerable health and good humour of Mrs. Somers, — her exhaustless spirits, — her love of telling every thing, — seeing every thing, — and going every where, — what a striking contrast do they form with the character we have been discussing! How the community of Elton could get on without her, I know not. — An efficient prime minister would not be more missed in a nation than Mrs. Somers in this village."

" There is an indestructible cheerfulness and activity about her that would be invaluable," said Mrs. Grenville, " if it were less busy and bustling: — but, alas! we comment freely upon others, — and how much of every life is thus consumed!"

" Do not slander yourself, dear mother," said Constance, affectionately kissing Mrs. Grenville, " the world as much as you please, — it is

not worth defending — but I know at least one exception to your sweeping remark."

Mrs. Grenville returned her caress with a silent shake of the head, and they separated to prepare for a walk to the Manor House.

CHAP. XIV.

" Some fretful tempers wince at every touch;
You always do too little or too much."

" Your hope to please her, vain on every plan —
Herself should work that wonder, if she can.
Alas! her efforts double her distress;
She likes yours little, and her own still less.
Thus always teazing others, always teazed,
Her only pleasure is to be displeased."

COWPER.

THE day and hour appointed by cousin Frances for her visit arrived. The weary sun had made a golden set, and the lovely scenery around the Priory seemed to wear its most smiling aspect to bid her welcome. The garden was rich in clustering flowers — the little paddock that skirted it, fragrant with new-made hay — the woods that circled the fine domain of the Manor House, still glowed in the softened radiance of the setting sun — and Mrs. Grenville and Constance were listening to the melody of the evening sounds, gently stealing upon the ear, with that fulness of enjoyment, which is tasted only by the

reflective and cultivated mind; when the approach of a carriage brought them from the world of feeling and imagination, where they loved to linger, to the world of reality and Cousin Frances.

They quickened their pace, and arrived at the hall door, just in time to give a smiling greeting to their visitor — to see her walk through the hall, with a cross face, followed by a worn-out, wearied-looking maid, and a cross dog — the latter was constantly introduced by Frances, on the plea, that it was the only living thing disinterestedly and personally attached to her.

As soon as the incessant snarlings of the favourite had subsided into that intermitting growl, which occasionally permitted a voice besides his own to be heard — Cousin Frances was congratulated upon her looks, and upon the auspicious state of the weather.

"You must have had a delightful journey!" said Constance. "It has been such a brilliant day!"

"Too brilliant by half," replied Frances, peevishly. — "I can understand the luxury of such a day in autumn; but a 'brilliant day,' as you call it, in summer, is all glare and heat."

"A 'jour demoiselle — ni vent, ni poussière, ni soleil,' would have suited better perhaps for travelling," said Mrs. Grenville; — "the line of country you passed through, however, is particularly beautiful — I know nothing prettier than the view from Carlton Hill."

"Yes — it is very well — very beautiful when you can see it — but there was no seeing any thing for the sun;" returned Frances, in that aggrieved tone which indicated how much the sun had been to blame in the affair. "The river was all glitter, and the skies all glare — I was glad to shut my eyes, and get rid of them."

"I hope you drove through the park when you reached the Manor House," said Mrs. Grenville, in a conciliatory accent; "the lane is so very rough."

Frances answered in the affirmative.

"You must have reached it just at a happy moment," pursued Mrs. Grenville. "Those fine woods are magnificent at sun-set!"

"The happy moment had passed," replied Frances; "the sun was too low, and that massive foliage looked only heavy and sombre."

Mrs. Grenville not knowing exactly how to frame an apology for the various misdemeanours of which the sun appeared to have been guilty

— thought it prudent to dismiss the subject, and to hope that Frances was not much fatigued. — Her hopes proved fallacious. — Frances was excessively fatigued — so much so, that she was fit for nothing — indeed, could she have imagined her fatigue would have been so great, no consideration would have induced her to undertake the journey — it would be a long time before she again ventured on one of that length — it was rash, with her poor constitution, and harassed spirits.

Mrs. Grenville again took refuge in hope. — She rang the bell for coffee, and hoped that a lounge upon the sofa might assist in recruiting all this exhaustion.

The few minutes pause that succeeded this arrangement, were passed by Mrs. Grenville in meditating upon the probable cause of this fatigue.—What could it be? — not surely a journey of sixty miles, through an excellent road, in an easy carriage.—What disastrous circumstance could have occurred to check even the kindly feelings so natural upon the sight of an old friend; to cloud and chill the moment of greeting — that moment generally so full of smiles and joy.

Her speculations were soon interrupted, and the strain of lamentation renewed. Frances traced part of the guilt of this excessive fatigue to her coach-maker. — Leader's carelessness was really abominable; — she had discovered, soon after the commencement of her journey, that one of the blinds of her carriage would not stir — it was fixed as fate — no mortal hand could move it — the combined efforts of John and Powel had been vain; and she had been exposed to the glare of the sun — quite a tropical sun, for hours.

The source of her disquietude now stood revealed — a petty inconvenience was precisely what cousin Frances could not bear. — A deep affliction she would probably have endured with dignified decorum; but a defective spring set all the warring elements of her nature in motion.— Leader had used her shamefully — the carriage had been in his hands not a fortnight before — and returned in this comfortless state; — but she was always unfortunate — always neglected. — Had she been some dashing Duchess, it would not have happened; but an untitled gentlewoman was too insignificant a person to be attended to. — She was sick of tradesmen, and

their detestable servility; — and she continued ruminating over her injuries, till every moment seemed to deepen her resentment against the sun, and his fellow delinquent, Leader — and Constance looked so inclined to laugh, and take up their defence, that Mrs. Grenville thought it best to employ her in superintending the tea-table.

Coffee, however, and the cheerful tones of Mrs. Grenville, were not without their soothing effect. — It was, indeed, difficult to resist the winning sweetness of such a mind and manners. — The ruffled wave became sufficiently calm to reflect the sunny brightness of her smile, and the cloud that sat upon the brow of Frances gradually dissipated, till at length it wholly dispersed. — She began to listen with good-humoured interest to the history, told by Constance, of Elton and its inhabitants — to reciprocate smiles, civilities, and kind wishes; and on their separating for the night, was wrought up to declare, that it was many years since she had enjoyed an hour so much as that which they had just passed.

CHAP. XV.

"We may say of men's tempers, as of most buildings, that they have several aspects; of which some are agreeable, others disagreeable." ROCHEFOUCAULT.

"Pause then,
And weigh thy value with an even hand;
If thou be rated by thy estimation,
Thou dost deserve enough."
SHAKSPEARE.

THIS happy frame continued throughout the next day, and, under its influence, the house and its arrangements were just what Frances most admired.—The rooms were all proportion and cheerfulness, neither too large nor too small for comfort — the garden perfection — such a delightful combination of the useful and the pleasant — sun and shade so happily distributed — so much taste without pretension — such a union of embellishment and simplicity she had rarely seen. — Mrs. Grenville hinted at certain possibilities of improvement, but Frances listened with wonder and incredulity — all was unimprovably charming.

Mr. Mortimer paid his respects in the course of the morning, with a flattering alacrity that was duly appreciated; and their evening stroll, and the book by which it was succeeded, were both pronounced delightful.

Constance began secretly to upbraid herself for injustice to Frances, and to wonder how she could have been betrayed into thinking her so very unpleasant a person.

The next day, too, was all comfort and cheerfulness. — Towards dinner-time, indeed, Mrs. Grenville thought she could detect symptoms of cloudiness — an increase of gravity, somewhat of an ominous character — but it was rather perceptible than obvious.

Another day passed, and the gloom became less doubtful; and by the following morning it was portentous. — The storm at length burst — four days had passed without a call from Lady Lennox — was such neglect to be endured? — were such airs to be borne?

An indignant flush stole over the cheek of Constance at this unqualified accusation.

"Is it quite impossible," said she "that some unavoidable engagement may have kept Lady Lennox at home? — But really, should this not

be the case, I see nothing so extremely atrocious in the delay."

"Oh! I dare say not," replied Frances; "people are always vastly tolerant when their own dignity is not in question — they exercise the most praiseworthy and surprising equanimity when their own pride is untouched. — But pray tell me," continued she, in a solemn tone, "does an interval of four days usually occur in your intercourse with the Manor House?"

Mrs. Grenville was truth itself — and she felt compelled to acknowledge that it was rather a rare occurrence.

"I knew it," returned Frances, with increased solemnity of accent. — "Impertinence and neglect are the portion assigned to me — I expect nothing else" — and she assumed an air of deep resignation.

"The young people are dispersed at present," observed Mrs. Grenville; "Sir Henry and Percy are in town, and Caroline is staying a few days with Mrs. Bridges. — The absence of Lady Lennox is entirely accidental — besides, she is much of an invalid — I am sure she is too kind and too well-bred to neglect any one, and especially a friend of mine."

" Your consolatory suggestions are really too flattering," replied Frances; — " to be interesting by proxy, is so remarkably gratifying! — I am much obliged to you, but it does not suit me to shine by reflection. — I do not desire the honour of being *tolerated*, even for Mrs. Grenville's sake."

" I only meant," said Mrs. Grenville, " that the friendship subsisting between Lady Lennox and myself, precluded the possibility of intentional neglect on her part. — One word, I dare say, will explain the whole business."

" Oh! do not imagine I feel or care about it," said Frances — " whether she explains it or no, is a matter of perfect indifference to me. — I hope I can manage to exist without any attention from Lady Lennox, important as she is in her own estimation."

" At any rate, she is not the only person who overrates her own importance," said Constance, in a tone of unrepressed satire.

Frances bore the insinuation with philosophy — impetuosity had rather a quieting effect upon her feelings — it was far less irritating than the superiority of calm endurance.

" Common civility is all I claim," said she, with the meek air of a martyr. — " I hope the demand is not extravagant."

" At the worst," said Mrs. Grenville, " there has been but one defaulter — every other person in Elton, upon whose civility we have any claim, has, I believe, paid her respects to you."

" Oh! yes; the *nobodies* in a neighbourhood are generally sufficiently prompt in their attentions," replied Frances.

Mrs. Grenville wishing, if possible, to divert the current of her feelings, did not undertake the defence of the *nobodies*, but changing the subject, said, " *A propos* to neighbourhood, Frances, you will be glad to hear that your old friend, Mr. Berkley, has settled only ten miles off — I must invite him to meet you."

" Pray, take no such trouble on my account," said Frances. — " I am not at all dependent on society for amusement."

" But the sight of an old friend is something more than amusement — something better than an every-day pleasure — it awakens a thousand delightful feelings," observed Mrs. Grenville. — " Constance, my love, write for me directly."

Constance sat down to her desk. — "The Hamiltons are at present on a visit to Mr. Berkley," said she, looking up at Mrs. Grenville — "I must include them, of course?"

"Oh! let me beg, then," said Frances, "that the invitation may be delayed. — If there is any thing I have a dread of, it is people's friends — they are always so disagreeable."

"These are a happy exception, then," observed Mrs. Grenville, laughing. — "Colonel Hamilton is a remarkably pleasant entertaining man — he has travelled every where, and seen every thing."

"Do not mention that as a recommendation, pray," exclaimed Frances. — "The great difficulty now is to find a person who has not travelled — it is quite a relief to meet with any one who has not crossed the Alps, and seen the Glaciers, and wintered at Rome."

Their conversation was interrupted by the entrance of a servant, with a note from Lady Lennox.

"*To Mrs. Grenville.*

"I FLATTER myself, my dear friend, that you have been very busy, wondering where I can

have hid myself for the last few days. — So many would not have elapsed, without my paying my respects to Mrs. Egerton, had I not been unpleasantly occupied. — The day after I saw you, I received a note telling me that Caroline was taken alarmingly ill, and Mrs. Bridges thought the symptoms so formidable, that she begged me to set off without a moment's delay. — I went with all the horrors of scarlet and typhus fever before me — but I rejoice that I had not time to infect you with my fears and forebodings — your kind sympathy would have been very needlessly awakened. — The mountain and mouse, and much ado about nothing, are favourite pastimes with us poor mortals. — On my arrival, I found that all this alarm arose from a common sore throat and slight fever; from which Caroline is already so much recovered, that she accompanied me home; and a few days confinement to her room is all the care she will require.

" I am beset with morning visitors, from whom there is no chance of escape — but tell Mrs. Egerton that I must claim the privilege of an old friend — send punctilio to Coventry, and beg you all to indulge me with your company at dinner. — The absentees return with my brother

to-day — but we shall be quite *en famille.* — Why should another day pass without our meeting?

" Ever affectionately yours,
" J. LENNOX."

" Dear Lady Lennox!" exclaimed Constance, with something of triumph in her accent.

" What shall I say?" enquired Mrs. Grenville, addressing Mrs. Egerton, and taking up her pen — " Yes or no — to go, or not to go."

" Go — by all means —" said Frances; " but I beg to be excused — I have a very painful head-ache — and really I do not feel equal to the exertion."

" We will decline the invitation, then, of course," said Mrs. Grenville, dipping her pen in the ink.

" Not for the world," returned Frances. — " I shall enjoy a solitary evening of all things. — Fido and I," said she, caressing the dog, " shall do vastly well together."

" That is entirely out of the question," said Mrs. Grenville. — " I must pronounce my most decided negative to that arrangement. — You can indulge your love of solitude *ad libitum* at

Fairfield — but here, I must be allowed to interfere. — Country cousins are unmanageable persons," said she smiling — " not easily shaken off."

" If I might be allowed the privilege of choice," said Frances —

" Of choice by all means," returned Mrs. Grenville — " another day will suit Lady Lennox quite as well — Shall I say that you do not feel well enough ?"

" Oh ! no — pray, let us go — let us go," said Frances. — " The society of Lady Lennox is, I have no doubt, much more to your taste than mine. — I do not wish any one to make sacrifices on my account — and I will not incur the reproach of abridging your pleasures."

" My pleasure is to consult your wishes and convenience," said Mrs. Grenville. — " Allow me to plead your head-ache as an excuse."

" I shall allow no such thing," said Frances. " I am not going to condemn you to the purgatory of passing an evening with me, when the means of escape are at hand, and it is evidently your wish to avail yourself of them."

Constance, feeling very troublesome symptoms of irritation mounting to her cheeks,

walked out of the room an inch or two taller than usual.

"My dear Frances," said Mrs. Grenville, "how can I convince you that I have no wish but yours?"

Frances was not to be convinced — deaf to all remonstrances, and protestations, she insisted upon going; and walked off to her own apartment with the afflicted look of a victim; suffering, but resigned.

CHAP. XVI.

" What is genius? — 'tis a flame
Kindling all the human frame;
'Tis the lightning of the mind,
Unsubdued and undefined;
'Tis the flood that pours along
The full clear melody of song;
'Tis the sacred boon of Heaven,
To its choicest favourites given." ETONIAN.

" From Heaven descends
The flame of genius to the human breast,
And love, and beauty, and poetic joy,
And inspiration."

" This, nor gems, nor stores of gold,
Nor purple state, nor culture, can bestow,
But God alone, when first his mighty hand
Imprints the secret bias of the soul."
AKENSIDE.

MRS. EGERTON entered the carriage with a desponding countenance, and maintained a resolute silence during the short drive. — It was in vain that Constance and Mrs. Grenville endeavoured to divert her attention from her

own woes to the beauty of the park-scenery through which they drove. — Neither the noble woods, nor the smiling country, nor Constance's favourite dell, where

> "Wild rose, eglantine, and broom
> Wasted around their rich perfume,"

could win a smile, or extort an admiring word; — she leaned back, moody and melancholy, with a contracted angular brow, and wrinkled forehead, in a corner of the carriage.

The aspect of things, however, improved in the drawing-room, — the angles were less acute, the brow expanded, the wrinkles unfolded, — cousin Frances became all courtesy — yet was she no hypocrite — she was only exercising that self-control, which was possible, though not easy.

It is singular that minor motives should often produce a powerful effect, which is looked for in vain, from the highest and the best. — Let those who speculate on human nature, and its endless inconsistencies, solve the enigma. A conviction of duty, of responsibility — the delight of increasing the happiness of others — the policy of guarding our own — how often

are they all insufficient to restrain the ebullitions, or to regulate the infirmities of temper; — but strange to tell — the elephant, who could trample down an armed host, permits himself to be led by a little child — the faults over which a sense of duty to God have no power, yield to a sense of decorum.

There are persons, indeed, who, on the subject of temper, plead a sort of prescriptive right to indulgence, on the ground of constitutional infirmity, or hereditary entailment, — but before such pleas can be considered valid in the court of conscience, let them say, whether there are no circumstances sufficiently powerful, whether there is no presence sufficiently august, to awe them into self-control — whether, in certain moments of their lives, they have not found the most indignant feelings controllable—the fiercest blaze of passion repressible?

If this be the case, and experience attests the fact, the plea of necessity falls to the ground; — and can they forget, that in every moment of their lives, they are in a presence the most august — under the vigilant observation of that mighty Being, compared to whose glance, the

gaze of an assembled world is powerless and insignificant?

This is the avowed theory of numbers, who scruple not to darken and trouble the stream of life by capricious waywardness, or unrestrained irritability; — who shed without remorse the bitterest drops into the crystal cup of domestic happiness.

But to return to cousin Frances. — The social spirit of the Manor House could not but be contagious. — In the quiet kindness of Lady Lennox there was the very reality of welcome — it was impossible, not to feel at home in a moment, and the animated gaiety of Percy, contrasted well, with the more dignified courtesy of his brother.

During dinner, Frances was treated with an attention that kept her in good humour, and upon leaving the dining-room, an hour was pleasantly beguiled in examining all that was curious and antique about the Manor House.

The gentlemen joined them soon after their return to the drawing-room.

"And pray how does the Berkshire world go on, my dear madam?" said Mr. Herbert, draw-

ing his chair with very chatty intentions a little closer to Mrs. Egerton.

There was a comprehensiveness in this question, nearly fatal to the reviving placidity of cousin Frances : — to be expected to record, and detail the state of Berkshire — to play the part of the County Chronicle — it was too much — coldly therefore disclaiming all knowledge of Berkshire news and politics, she finished by saying,

" Fairfield is the only corner of the Berkshire world, with which I am familiar, and it is quite as dull a corner as ever."

" Dull ! is it?" exclaimed Mr. Herbert. — " How does that come to pass? — Does not the sun shine as brightly, and the air blow as freshly there, as in any other place?"

" Yes, it is a very healthy spot, I believe," replied Mrs. Egerton.

" The guilt of dulness, then, does not rest upon the place. — Where are we to fix it?" enquired Mr. Herbert.

" Upon the people — myself inclusive, if you please, said cousin Frances — we are a dull set."

"Dulness," said Mr. Herbert, — "is a mere chimera — a phantom, that has no real existence — look at it steadily, and it vanishes in a moment."

"Oh! I beg your pardon, sir; I have been in many a place, and at many a party," observed Sir Henry, "where dulness reigned —not the fugitive dulness of which you speak; but real, substantial, palpable dulness — that might be seen, felt, and understood."

"Pray, my dear mother," said Percy, "did I not hear a rumour — a delightful rumour, — that the Seymours were meditating a visit? Do not let it die away like a mere common sound."

"You must be content to wait till September," replied Lady Lennox. — "Mr. Seymour tells me that he has no hope of escaping from briefs, special pleas, and pleaders till then."

"What drudgery for such a mind as Seymour's!" exclaimed Sir Henry.

"Drudgery!" echoed Mr. Herbert — "it is precisely the wholesome discipline that it requires. — In spite of his literary taste, Seymour, with his social propensities, would have been a mere idler, without the stimulus of a profession."

"Yes — but the constant collision with men of common-place minds," said Sir Henry — "that eternal routine never ending, still beginning, of dull men, and dull things — the clashing of interests, the petty rivalries. — How can he endure it?"

"This collision," said Mr. Herbert, "preserves the mind bright, and free from rust — and the routine keeps it in order."

"So instead of a man of genius, we have a man of law, and technicality — a poor exchange," said Sir Henry.

"You do not mean to insinuate, my dear fellow, that the study of the law is fatal to genius," said Percy — affecting great alarm. "If that be the case, what an eclipse is preparing for the world in my person!"

"If the study of the law be not unfriendly to genius, its practice is decidedly so," said Sir Henry.

"I am safe then for the present," said Percy, laughing. — "Genius and I need not shake hands, and say good-bye for these ten years at least; — but pray, my dear Harry, does this said genius take alarm at the modest curls of a

barrister? — or only at the more formidable volume of a Judge's wig?"

"Genius in a wig!" exclaimed Constance, laughing — "the very idea is preposterous, *learning* in a wig, if you please — nothing can be more appropriate — but genius! Who ever heard of such masquerading!"

"I see it — I see it!" exclaimed Percy — "I acknowledge the melancholy truth. — We might as well expect Apollo to wear a flapped waistcoat; or the Muses, hoops and lappets."

"But seriously," said Sir Henry — "the very language of the law is enough to crush the bright flame. — What has genius to do with precedents, and statutes, and pleas, and demurrers — with dull repetition, and tedious prolixity, with the quips and cranks of the law."

"The quips and cranks give me some hope," said Percy — "genius may now and then amuse herself with them."

"And why should a study which quickens and stimulates the intellect, be unfavourable to genius?" asked Mr. Herbert.

"Ah!" said Percy, "why should we not see the study of the law, regulating the flights of

genius — and genius, in its turn, illustrating the law?"

"As well may we expect to warm ourselves by the lightning's blaze!" said Sir Henry.

"Let us understand one another," said Mr. Herbert: — "let us adjust preliminaries, and begin at the beginning. — What is this rare, coy, delicate quality, which you call genius? — Do me the favour to define it."

"Define it!" echoed Sir Henry — "Oh! it is too divine, too etherial for definition. — Catch the rainbow! — fetter the truant breeze! — besides, I can say with Burke — I have no great opinion of a definition. — It may be very exact, and yet go but a very little way towards informing us of the nature of the thing defined."

"Suppose we try what negatives will do, said Percy. — "It is not mere intellectual power, however great. — It is not talent, however lively and vivacious. — It is something more creative, more intuitive."

"More creative, perhaps," returned Mr. Herbert; "but spare us the intuitive, if you please."

"By no means," rejoined Sir Henry — "it is a rare, precious, peculiar gift — a spark from

heaven, which the skill of mortal hand never yet kindled — nor can it be extinguished by circumstances the most adverse."

"Suppose," said Mr. Herbert, "that Milton, and Shakspeare, had been born among the Canadian Indians, instead of in merry England — what would have become of this intuitive genius? — They would have hunted, and fished, and scalped their enemies, and smoked their long pipes like the rest of the Indian world."

"They would never have been common men," replied Sir Henry, eagerly. — "Nature, in her beauty, and glory, would have been still theirs, to love and to worship. — Their war songs would have breathed the wild notes of genius — their eloquence would have armed the hand of patriotism, and quickened the soul of valour."

"Suppose we place them among the Hottentots," said cousin Frances, drily. — "What would they have achieved there?"

"Do you think, in such a case," said Percy, "that they would have passed the bounds of space, and time, and

—— rode sublime
Upon the seraph-wings of Extasy?

Would the golden keys have been then intrusted to 'Nature's darling,' — the immortal boy?"

"The fact of his being 'Nature's darling,'" said Mr. Herbert, "was, after all, an affair of latitude and longitude. — Had he been born in Caffraria, she would have vouchsafed him no such distinction. — You see how completely genius is dependent on circumstances."

"Circumstances may assist its developement," returned Sir Henry — "but they have nothing to do with its creation. — The poet's view of the subject is more accurate than yours, —

> Full many a gem of purest ray serene
> The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear: —

The gem is still the same, though hidden for ever from mortal gaze."

"That is a gratuitous assertion, very easily made by you and the poet," said Mr. Herbert. "Now as dull men like myself can discover genius only in its developement, we are apt to argue from facts.—Finer spirits may, perhaps, by some mysterious process, detect it in its latent state, and may amuse themselves with theories."

"Perhaps," said Mrs. Grenville, "we are too much accustomed to think and speak of

genius, as of a distinct faculty or endowment;—now it appears to me to be made up of a powerful intellect, a creative imagination, and deep sensibility.—Without this union, genius does not exist;—and when these gifts are nicely blended and balanced, we see that rarest of all possessions, *first-rate* genius."

"And you think the shades and varieties of genius are to be traced to the different proportion in which these faculties and endowments are distributed," said Sir Henry.

"Yes; when the nice balance to which I alluded occurs," returned Mrs. Grenville,—"we see sublime, comprehensive, wonderful genius—as in Milton, Shakspeare, and Scott.—Where a creative imagination preponderates, it shows itself in wild and eccentric effusions—as in some of the German school.—Where profound and uncontrollable sensibility predominates, we have morbid, moody, melancholy genius, like Byron's.—I speak of that which is displayed in poetical and literary efforts, rather than in the arts, because it exercises most power, and diffuses most pleasure."

"Whatever may be its component parts," observed Sir Henry, "it is of divine original.—

We may analyse the ray, and separate its brilliant colours, but the radiant source is still the same. — Genius is something distinct from the common operations of mind. — Learning may be taught — wisdom may be gained — taste may be given — but genius can neither be acquired nor imparted."

"But this is not to be attributed to any mystical peculiarity in genius," observed Mrs. Grenville. — "Can capacity of any kind, be imparted?"

"Yes; — the intellectual faculties may be enlarged and invigorated almost miraculously," replied Sir Henry; "but the quick perceptions, the intense feelings, the resistless, mysterious power of genius are as incommunicable as the physical strength of Samson or Hercules."

"And yet there are philosophers, of no mean reputation, who have compared the mind of man to a sheet of blank paper," pursued Mr. Herbert.

"Surely, my dear sir, you do not mean to maintain the monstrous paradox of the equality of minds in their native state," said Sir Henry.

"Paradox as it is, it will cost you some trouble to disprove it," replied Mr. Herbert.

" It is disproved by constantly-recurring facts — by the experience of every people under heaven," said Sir Henry.

" Oh! you are a believer, then, in the exploded doctrine of innate ideas, and heaven-born genius," said Percy. — " Take care that the ghost of Locke does not break your slumbers."

" Not of innate ideas, — but certainly of heaven-born genius," replied Sir Henry. — " To suppose that secondary causes have no influence over genius, is the idle dream of enthusiasm; — but to believe it the mere creation of circumstances, is surely no less absurd. — The acorn which is crushed beneath the foot of the passing traveller, might have become glorious in its beauty and majesty; — it might have afforded shelter and shade to thousands, and stood for ages the mighty monarch of the forest. — And thus it is with genius — the germ exists, independently of education or circumstances — it may, indeed, be crushed in the bud, or it may be developed in all the luxuriance of consummate beauty."

" And yet it has been said," observed Mr. Herbert, — " that wherever there is a power of

sensation, genius must be the same, and would, with proper cultivation, produce the same effect."

"What absurdity has not been said?" asked Sir Henry. — "As well might it be affirmed that the seed of the nettle, with care and culture, would produce the rose. — It is true, there are no innate ideas — but there are innate faculties — and a striking and inherent difference in those faculties in different persons — a greater power of receiving impressions, and a native aptitude for certain pursuits. — And have we not sometimes seen, especially as it respects the arts and sciences, a certain instinct of genius — a mysterious and constitutional propensity of mind, growing up in defiance of circumstances. — I will not affirm with Voltaire, — "Tous ceux qui se sont fait un nom dans les beaux arts, les ont cultivés malgré leur parens; et la nature a été en eux plus forte que l'éducation;" — but is it not partly true? — Have there not been numberless instances in which this mysterious propensity of nature has been not only apparent, but absolutely unconquerable. — Was not Michael Angelo intended for a weaver? — Claude Loraine, for a baker? — Corregio, for a wood-cutter? — Look at Handel — La Caille

— Mendelsohn — was their rare and astonishing pre-eminence to be traced to casual excitement?— See Gifford, tracing problems with an awl, on a scrap of leather, in a cobbler's stall. — Mozart, at five years of age, comprehending the intricacies of harmony. — Gainsborough, sketching on every cottage-wall — and deny, if you can, the instinct of genius for which I contend. — No; — there is a mighty power always at work in the gifted mind; sometimes kept down by the iron grasp of circumstances, but in itself indestructible."

"This, as Trim said in the question of souls and no souls, is putting one man sadly over the head of another," observed Mr. Herbert.

"But does not such infinite variety produce effects the most beautiful and beneficial?" said Mrs. Grenville — "just as the various classes and ranks in a civilised state form a social system of beauty and order."

"Heaven defend us from a world crowded with men of genius!" exclaimed cousin Frances. — "Our every-day concerns would be but poorly managed."

"Yes; we should have reverie when there ought to be action, and a waste of energy where

there ought to be repose," said Mr. Herbert. "Things would be as much out of their right places, as when Orpheus set the trees and rocks dancing."

"We need not distress ourselves, I believe, sir," said Sir Henry: — "a plethora of genius is not one of the diseases to which this world of ours is subject."

"I do not know, indeed," said Mr. Herbert: —"there has been rather an alarming increase of poets within the last twenty years."

"Fear nothing, sir," said Sir Henry; "nature will never be too prodigal in that way — and, you know, it was long ago said that poets are born, not made. — Ah! how are they to be envied! — Such a moment as this," said he, pointing to the beautiful scenery over which the moon was silently and softly pouring a flood of radiance — "such a scene as this would be inspiration to Scott, or Moore, or Campbell — but you and I, dull souls that we are, should probably get no farther than 'Oh! thou!'"

"I can answer for myself," replied Mr. Herbert, "in spite of Scott's assertion on that point, I never got half so far."

"You will not, then, sanction the definition which describes man as a rhyming animal," said Percy.

"Not I, indeed," said Mr. Herbert — "a 'cooking animal' is nearer the truth — but, nevertheless, I do not subscribe to the notion that poets are *born*."

"We shall not have time to settle the question this evening," said Sir Henry, attracted by the sound of a harp and voice in sweet accord, in an adjoining room; "but name your time and place, and, another day, I will bring such weapons as I can muster, to do battle with you on that point."

Mr. Herbert, though secretly wondering that any man could be tasteless enough to prefer a ballad to an argument, did not oppose the adjournment.

"Music — music, by all means," said he, in the most cheerful tone; and moving briskly towards the piano, he put on, for a few minutes, a listening attitude. — "Ah! very good — very good," — exclaimed he, addressing cousin Frances, as the closing chord was struck. "Times are changed since you and I were girl and boy, Mrs. Egerton: in that day such a per-

formance would have been thought extraordinary — now it is an every-day thing."

The *you* and *I* were *girl* and *boy*, was a phrase not very grateful to the ear of cousin Frances. — She numbered, at least, ten years less than Mr. Herbert; and feeling the full value of the circumstance, was by no means content that it should be buried in oblivion. — In much restless vexation, therefore, she sat, revolving in her own mind by what ingenious allusion, or happy recollection, the fact might be brought to light; — but all in vain; — it was utterly impracticable — she became entangled irrecoverably in a discussion upon the merits and demerits of Logier's system, — upon performers, and performances, — old modes and new, — which lasted till the carriage was announced — and it was not till she had been seated in it a few minutes that she found relief in complaint.

"It is really strange that people will talk so at random," said she, — "that Mr. Herbert should fancy we were girl and boy together, is most unaccountable; — I am sure the first impression I have of him was as a young man, talking about Cambridge, when I was in the nursery. — A most extraordinary blunder, in-

deed! — not that I care about the matter — but, whether young or old, it is not necessary to have a dozen imaginary years added to our age, and — truth is truth."

In an affair of such peculiar delicacy, Mrs. Grenville scarcely knew what course to take. — Any very lively sympathy would but aggravate the keen sense of wrong already felt by cousin Frances; — and to speak of it as a thing of no moment at all, would be indirect reproof —what was to be done? — At length a consolatory suggestion occurred to Mrs. Grenville.

"I do not think any body heard the observation but yourself," said she: — "the young people were talking, and playing, and busy with one another; and —"

"Oh! that is very uncertain," interrupted Frances:—"Mr. Herbert's voice is like a mill."

However, in spite of this cruel uncertainty, there was some balm in the hope that he might not have been overheard; and before they reached home, she had recovered sufficient good humour to decide that the Lennoxs, certainly, were a very delightful family.

CHAP. XVII.

" I do not believe that this caprice of a depraved taste will last long, and I will not show any deference to it by flattering the public." MONS. JOUY.

" He is the amanuensis of truth and history. — It is impossible to say how fine his writings are, unless we could describe how fine nature is. — He writes as fast as we can read, and yet he does not write himself down — He is always in the public eye, and we do not tire of him — His works taken together are almost like a new edition of human nature. — This is, indeed, to be an author ! " HAZLITT.

" I HAVE delightful news for you, dear mother," exclaimed Constance, as she was looking over the newspaper the next day — " at last ' Woodstock ' is announced — it is in the press, and will really be published very soon. — I wish it may be out before you leave us," continued she, addressing Mrs. Egerton.

" I am much obliged to you," returned Frances, in a tone more than usually peevish — " but I can wait very patiently for ' Woodstock ' a few months — or a few years, if necessary."

It was rather a curious feature in the character of cousin Frances, that she felt a certain jealousy of these admirable works. — Now, there could not be an atom of literary envy in the case, for, she had never in her life been guilty of writing an essay or a fragment — no, nor even so much as an enigma or a charade — yet, no sooner was the author of "Waverley" mentioned, than she bristled up into an attitude of resolute defiance, and instantly threw down the gauntlet. — It was the universal interest excited by these books — the full chorus of panegyric, that was so discordant to the ear of cousin Frances. — She was under the influence of the same sort of feeling which actuated the countryman, when he inscribed the name of Aristides on the oyster-shell.

"I am not so enthusiastic about this wonderful person as you are," continued she, pursuing the conversation — "I really see nothing so very extraordinary in his works."

Mrs. Grenville's acquaintance with human nature prevented her feeling much surprise at any perversity of mind which she might encounter — but the indignant wonder of Constance was not to be repressed.

"Not see any thing extraordinary in his works!" exclaimed Constance — "then I am sure I am very sorry for you — you are extremely to be pitied."

"Very likely," returned Frances, with a most imperturbable look; "nevertheless, it is a fact which I do not at all wish to conceal."

"But what can you mean by *nothing extraordinary?*" enquired Constance — "Is a combination of originality, pathos, wit, and humour, *nothing extraordinary?*"

"Such a combination would be indeed extraordinary if it could be found," replied Frances.

"Oh! it is found," exclaimed Constance, "in every work that has been written by this delightful author — and I pity the intellectual blindness that cannot perceive it, as much as I do the poor sightless creature for whom the sun in full splendour shines in vain."

"I am something like that matter-of-fact person, the Governor of Tilbury," said Frances, "who says,

> The Spanish fleet thou canst not see,
> Because 'tis not in sight.

I do not perceive this rare combination, because it does not exist."

"How is it that the testimony of the whole world — that is, of the whole cultivated and intelligent world, is against you?" asked Constance — "how can you solve the enigma?"

"Very easily," returned Frances; "consider how few persons think for themselves. — It is a fashion — a mania — people talk each other into it."

"The same kind of mania that decided the merits of Homer, Shakspeare, and a few others," observed Mrs. Grenville.

"As to invention," continued Frances, "without appearing to hear Mrs. Grenville's observation — "he ransacks a parcel of old records and musty chronicles for rubbish that no one in the world thought worth remembering, vamps it up, and then there is a great outcry about his originality and invention. — I have no patience!"

"You might as well deny the genius of the sculptor who chisels the marble that lies hid beneath the earth into an Apollo Belvidere, or a Venus de Medicis," said Constance.

"And, then, how he does repeat himself," continued Frances, who found it easier to object than to argue. — "You are sure to meet with a goblin and a mad woman before you have read

half-a-dozen pages — and as to roundheads and cavaliers, I am tired of their names."

"Do you remember that aphorism of Lavater's?" said Mrs. Grenville — "'True genius repeats itself for ever, and never repeats itself — one ever-varied sense beams novelty and unity on all.' — Surely no one ever illustrated it so completely! — We may, indeed, trace the same hand — the same manner — but what a hand! and what a manner! — How infinite the variety — what bold sketching and beautiful grouping — the most powerful general effect is produced, and yet touches so exquisitely delicate! — I will mention only two of his female characters, to exemplify the truth of my observation: Meg Merrilies and Rebecca — the bold, fine, picturesque beauty of the character of the gipsy — the touching loveliness, the exquisite moral beauty of Rebecca!"

"Oh! how delightful they are!" exclaimed Constance, with that sigh of pleasure which sometimes escapes us at the recollection of a favourite intellectual repast.

"Well! I cannot admire such impossible persons!" returned cousin Frances — "common sense, unluckily, interferes to prevent me."

"You pay no compliment to common sense," said Constance, "if you set her in battle-array against the purest gratification of the imagination and the heart."

"Imagination, indeed!" echoed Frances; "I am sure he draws enough upon his imagination for his characters — think of Fenella, and Norna of the Fitful Head! Are they like any thing that ever existed?"

"If he invests some of his characters with the magic of poetic fancy, why should we quarrel with him? — It only adds to the delightful variety of his pages," observed Constance.

"And when he is to display those qualities and feelings which are to be discovered in the duties and trials of life, who ever did more justice to the female character? — who ever conceived it more beautifully?" said Mrs. Grenville.

"As a woman, I feel grateful to him," observed Constance, "when I think of the tenderness, purity, and delicacy of Rebecca and Jeanie Deans — I can dwell upon these characters with such pleasure — they seem friends with whom I can hold delightful communion."

"Delightful communion with a parcel of shadows!" exclaimed Frances.

"Oh! I prefer them infinitely to most of my acquaintance, not to say my relations," added Constance, laughing.

"Well! that surpasses every thing I ever heard," said Frances, with uplifted hands.

"I feel more intimate with them — more attached to them — there is more in them to love," pursued Constance.

"Why, you could not speak of them more affectionately," observed Frances, "if this god of your idolatry had really animated his creatures after the fashion of Prometheus."

"I can easily enter into the feelings Constance expresses," said Mrs. Grenville. — "The illusions of this delightful writer are so complete, that we forget they are illusions. — In this respect, his works differ materially from many clever productions of the day. In some of these the characters flit before us like brilliant phantasmagoria — they are graceful, spirited, or grotesque — often well defined, and in strong relief — but then, like the shifting figures in a magic lantern, they are gone in a moment; and leave no impression on the memory or the heart. — Now, the characters in these books, on the contrary, take hold of the affections; the scenes fix themselves for ever on the memory, and we

recur to them as we do to some favourite spot in nature, for refreshment and delight. — Then, he has corrected the appetite for trash, and given a higher tone to this class of literature, and a healthier one to the taste of the age."

"I should like to know how long he intends to go on writing," said Frances, whose feelings of irritation were every moment winding up to a higher pitch. — "Half-a-hundred volumes has he already inflicted on the world — it is quite unheard of, I am sure! I wonder what he means by it."

"Means by it!" echoed Constance, whose enthusiasm kept pace with the increasing irritation of Frances — "he means to illustrate the annals of his country — to win an immortal name — to make the whole world his debtors! —Would that he could find the *elixir vitæ*, and go on for ever!"

"Well! I hope I shall never again be persuaded into reading any of his tiresome books," said Frances vehemently, and rising to leave the room.

"Doubtless, he would be deeply mortified if he could be acquainted with your decision," observed Constance, in her most satirical accent.

Frances replied, only by closing the door with unusual energy, and Mrs. Grenville cast an appealing and reproachful glance at Constance.

"Yes, I know I deserve that look, dearest mother — but is she not insufferable? — The cobbler criticising Apelles; — the fly finding fault with the proportions of the column, — were not more absurd. — I always thought her very tiresome — but such thorough obliquity of mind, who can endure?"

"It is rather obliquity of temper than of mind in this case," said Mrs. Grenville; "but whichever it may be, we have only to meet it with playfulness and good-humour; — defective taste must not be visited with dislike or disgust, for a deficiency in charity is still worse than deficiency in taste."

"But where the taste is so entirely perverted, it amounts to a moral defect," replied Constance, "especially where this perversity does not arise from dulness of intellect, and slowness of perception; but rather from an obtuseness or perversity of feeling, which must destroy all sympathy with such a mind. Now do not you think, dear mother, that a correct taste is one proof of moral excellence?"

"As far as it indicates an accurate perception of truth," replied Mrs. Grenville, "it is closely allied with moral excellence; but I have met with persons of very defective taste, whom I could love and admire."

"Love and admire!" echoed Constance. — Now, in my opinion, it is such a formidable barrier — such a check to pleasant intercourse. Our most delightful feelings are so rudely thrown back, that the revulsion creates repugnance: — the utmost I can do, is to respect such persons for any virtues they may possess, and hope that the fates may bring us as little into contact as possible. Now, for instance, if I select a beautiful passage of poetry, and my auditor listens with a cold, unmoved, unadmiring look, I feel completely severed from such a person — there is a certain dissonance in our minds, which will for ever prevent their blending."

"But I have seen eyes," said Mrs. Grenville, "that never beamed with a single emotion of taste or genius, which have been bright with benevolence. I have known hearts that never throbbed over the most beautiful and highly wrought fictitious tale, that still glowed with pure

and genuine piety; — have such no claim upon your affections?"

"Oh! the greatest possible claim," replied Constance; "but then the affections are not quite controllable things; they are not to be managed by a legal, technical process; — we do not love, because we ought to love, but because we cannot help loving."

"And genius, taste, or talent, would be more likely to win these affections, 'so light and so vain,' than principle and piety," observed Mrs. Grenville.

"No, no," returned Constance, blushing, — "my affections are given to those who combine them: — virtue and piety, when destitute of taste, sensibility, and imagination, remind me of a fine tree, in a wintry landscape — there it stands, strongly defined, in the cold, clear, atmosphere — its stem all stability, its ramifications all distinctness — but where is the soft green foliage, that invites us to draw near, and repose luxuriously beneath its shade? — No, I am quite content to look at it, at a distance — give it full credit for being excellent timber, and pass on."

"Ah! this wintry tree will be crowned with unfading wreaths, in the garden, to which, in due

time, it will be transplanted," said Mrs. Grenville, seriously.

"Oh! do not look really grave, my own dear mother!" exclaimed Constance, embracing Mrs. Grenville; — "if I am too fastidious, it is you who have spoiled me, by being what you are.— After living with you, is it reasonable to expect that I should be easily pleased?"

At this moment the footstep of cousin Frances was heard on the stairs.

"Here she comes!" exclaimed Constance— "I am sure her step has any thing but music in it. — Forgive me the inhospitable question — but when is she likely to bless Fairfield with her exhilarating presence?"

"Oh! not yet these three months," said Mrs. Grenville, laughing, as Constance escaped at an opposite door.

CHAP. XVIII.

"I would my horse had the speed of your tongue, and so good a continuer." SHAKSPEARE.

"But sedentary weavers of long tales
Give me the fidgets, and my patience fails."
COWPER.

BREAKFAST was scarcely over the next morning at the Priory, when the cheerful tone of a voice in the hall proclaimed the approach of Mrs. Somers. — She was, generally, on these occasions, heard before she was seen.

"Vastly pleasant, indeed, you look, Mrs. Lucy," said she to the servant in attendance. — "Your garden is a paradise, as I always say — and William quite a treasure — indeed, I knew he would be one, when I recommended him to Mrs. Grenville — all the ladies well, I hope."

Before Lucy could answer, Mrs. Somers had made her way into the parlour.

"I am an early visitor," said she, in the same brisk tone, "but I will not apologise — it would

be waste of words, I am sure, in this house. — I always say, one can never go at an inconvenient moment to Mrs. Grenville's — she always makes one welcome; and Miss Constance too," added she, half turning towards her — "there is no house where I have such pleasant chat as at Mrs. Grenville's: — it is not every body, indeed, that is so well worth talking to," said she, smiling graciously; — "not that I make any difference on that account, for people can't help their capacities; and if they happen not to be very entertaining, it's their misfortune."

"And ours too, I think, ma'am," observed Constance.

"Ah! very true, indeed, my dear," said Mrs. Somers: "you are always ready — you have always something clever to say. However, I do hope we shall like these new people."

"What new people?" enquired Mrs. Grenville.

"Why, Mr. Kingston has found a tenant at last."

Now this house of Mr. Kingston's was a house of some pretensions — it had been built within the last six years, and though in the midst of the village, a carriage sweep, miniature lawn, and

scanty shrubbery, conferred on it very considerable distinction: — its interior, too, with folding doors, that made small rooms large, and imparted a capacity of concentrating all the visiting population of Elton, was held in due estimation by that community.

"I hope," continued Mrs. Somers, "they have not been foolish enough to come into Kingston's terms. —'My good friend, Mr. Kingston,' said I, the moment I heard what he asked, 'it is quite preposterous: — I speak as a friend — but you stand in your own light — take my word for it, no body in their senses will give that price for your house:'— he used to say he would not take a farthing less; but I rather think he has been obliged to lower his tone. — After all, it is but a cockney concern; and to say the truth, I am surprised that the Twyfords have taken it: — that is to say, if they are *my* Twyfords."

"Oh! Twyford is the name, is it?" said Mrs. Grenville.

"Yes, Twyford," echoed Mrs. Somers — "a Mr. Twyford — whether bachelor, widower, or benedict, I have not yet ascertained. — Now the Twyfords of Dorsetshire, in my young days, were most intimate friends of our family — my

grandmother was second cousin — no — cousin once removed to Mrs. Grace Twyford, the celebrated beauty of her day — quite a toast. — There was a sad tale, about a disappointment in early life; just when all the bridal-finery was prepared, and three days only before the wedding was to have taken place: — it was to a Colonel Clavering she was engaged — a fine young man, looking like a hero, as my grandmother used to say.—Well! three days before the wedding was to have been celebrated, he was out shooting on the Twyford manor — I think it was the Twyford — but I will not be certain — it might be the Germaine — for the properties joined — however, I think it was the Twyford. —Well! his gun burst, and this fine young man was killed on the spot — a dreadful blow, you may suppose, to poor Grace Twyford."

"Dreadful, indeed!" exclaimed Mrs. Grenville.

This lady was wise enough never to attempt any thing beyond an exclamation or a short enquiry in the presence of Mrs. Somers: the achievement, indeed, would have been one of singular difficulty — but resolute talkers did exist,

who, after waiting in breathless impatience for that short pause which never came, in their utter hopelessness became sufficiently hardy to enter the lists with her — then the chiming and mingling of contending sense and sound — the strife of words and voices was appalling.

"Oh! it was a sad affair, indeed," pursued Mrs. Somers: — "poor Grace never got over it: — she did not, indeed, die of a broken heart, but she never could be persuaded to enter into a second engagement — though she had nine eligible offers — indeed, it was said ten — but my grandmother always doubted about the tenth. There was Major Egerton — no relation of yours, I believe, ma'am," added she, turning to cousin Frances — "no, I thought not," said she, scarcely pausing for the disclaiming negative — "the Egertons of Blake Hall — he was the first rejected swain — but he did not wear the willow long: — he afterwards distinguished himself very much in the American war; and married — let me recollect — I think the lady was a Ross; — sister to a young officer in one of the Scotch regiments — and they lived a great deal in the Highlands, and the Egertons used to grumble very much at his transportation, as they

called it. The second pretender to the fair lady was young Foley, of Foley Park — a very fine property he had — the Foley manors were quite magnificent — such timber! The woods, I believe, were coeval with the Druids! Then there was the Honourable Mr. Frampton!"

At this era of the recital, Constance, with an expressive glance at her mother, walked across the room for her work-box. — To listen, unoccupied, to the history of nine eligible offers, was more, she thought, than could be expected of human patience; — however, in the last case, the word eligible was certainly a misnomer, for Mrs. Somers proceeded to say, that the Honourable Mr. Frampton was no great loss.

"He turned out a sad scamp," continued she — "gambled away all his property, and lived abroad in a very disreputable way — almost broke his mother's heart — poor Lady Frampton! — she never could bear to hear the name of Grace Twyford! — she always traced Charles's wild doings to her refusal. — She persisted in saying, that he would have made a most excellent husband — but, however, I must say, I think Grace was quite right — there is no telling. — Next, a young clergyman, named Pelham, made

his proposals — no, I believe it was Scott the Barrister came next. — I am not quite certain about that — it might be Scott; however, upon second thoughts, I think it was Pelham. — Yes, yes, it was Pelham — he got on surprisingly in the church — became a Dean. — I remember seeing him often when I was a girl, at my grandmother's — Dean Pelham was very much there — I don't think he was married — I have no recollection of a Mrs. Pelham. — After Scott, followed a Mr. Fanshaw, who had made a large fortune in India — whether by fair means or not, might be a little questionable — but he was as rich as Crœsus — and a Sir Somebody, a widower — I can't think of his name — it has quite escaped me — but he was a Sir Somebody. — Last of all came Lord Mowbray — he would have been a capital match — every thing to recommend him — birth and fortune — quite an aristocratic-looking man — L'air noble, I am sure — and such a pair of eyes! — I used to wonder at Grace Twyford! But, however, the lady was not to be won — and her large property went to a distant branch of the family — quite a distant branch. — Now, whether these Twyfords are any relation, I shall make it my

business to discover. — I assure you, Mrs. Grenville, whenever I hear people running on about the fickleness of women, I always instance Grace Twyford — a charming woman she was! quite the toast of the county — I don't think the ladies have gained much by that fashion going out. — It was worth while to be a beauty in these days," — continued she, with a glance at Constance. — " Though, to be sure, I have heard people cried up, who had no pretension to beauty! — I used to wonder at the gentlemen — something like Charles's song in the ' School for Scandal,'

> " Let them be clumsy, or
> Let them be slim ;"

black or brown, they cared not a feather. — By the by, how admirably I have seen that play filled. — After Garrick (for my grandmother took me once or twice to see Garrick), I don't know, that I ever had a greater treat than seeing that play — King, and Parsons, and Mrs. Abingdon, — and Smith; he played the gentleman inimitably! — No, except Garrick — Oh! you never saw Garrick, Mrs. Grenville? — No, you were born too late for that. — Well, I am

sorry for it — no such treat will you ever have; — but I must bid you farewell," said she, rising with great quickness — your time-piece reproves me sadly — for I promised Mrs. Bentley to be with her by twelve o'clock. — She wants to consult me about some curtains she is contriving — she talked of moreen at first, but I overruled that. 'My dear Mrs. Bentley,' said I, 'in your small house — chintz, chintz against the world'— now the lining is the puzzle. — Bradley promised to send the patterns this morning — crimson or green, we vibrate between; — crimson would be the colour, but then it fades sadly — there's the rub — and you know there is no picking up Fortunatus's purse — she is sadly limited in that way, poor thing. — I really do think Mr. Bentley might have done more for her; — to be sure, the living is no great things, — but he was abominably selfish — must have his horse and his man-servant — now, walking would have been the very thing for him; he was so plethoric and puffy. — 'My good sir,' I used to say to him, 'depend upon it you are to blame' — and so it proved, for he died, poor man, of apoplexy, some years before you came to Elton — luckily, the widow had a something

of her own — but he left very little — a mere trifle — and such dilapidations! as Mr. Mortimer can testify. — I am sure I was quite ashamed for my old acquaintance, when I looked over the house — you never saw any thing so abominable! — He had held the living twenty years, and I don't think he had laid out fifty pounds in repairs — not a brush of paint in my day — the dairy and the great barn were ruins — absolute ruins. — To be sure Mr. Mortimer did behave remarkably well! — he did shine there — he is an excellent man! — his sermons are rather of the longest — but he is certainly an excellent man! — He would not distress Mrs. Bentley; but it must have been vastly provoking. — Ah! the house looks as it ought to look now. — We have made a happy exchange both in the parsonage and the pulpit; for my old friend Mr. Bentley was nothing particular there — very sleepy, and heavy indeed; — but, to be sure, to hear Mrs. Bentley talk of him, you would think he had the eloquence of St. Paul himself. — However, I am keeping you standing; and really I must bid you good-bye, and make the best of my way."

"Will you have the goodness to say to Mrs. Bentley, that if the evening should be very wet, our lesson in backgammon must be deferred till to-morrow?" said Mrs. Grenville.

"I will make a point of mentioning it — I am sure you are remarkably kind — for really our good old friend is by no means the aptest scholar in the world," said Mrs. Somers, with an expressive look, as she moved off.

From feelings of a mixed nature, made up of kindness and policy, Mrs. Grenville had undertaken to initiate Mrs. Bentley into the mysteries of backgammon — it was somewhat rash! — and Constance, after silently watching the progress of tuition for some time, predicted a complete failure; — in three weeks, Mrs. Bentley had learned three moves, and there her powers of attainment seemed to stop.

"She will never get beyond that fatal number, my dear mother," said Constance, laughing: —"there is an inveterate obstacle — she has not capacity or memory enough — she reminds me of that nation whose arithmetic stops for ever at the number three — they have no sign to express that number but the word *poellartarror-incourac* — and, therefore, of course, during the

lapse of ages, they have got no farther than *poellartarrorincourac* — the cumbersome word presents an insurmountable barrier — and Mrs. Bentley's intense stupidity is an obstacle of the same impracticable description. — No; you will never get any farther than that third move."

Mrs. Grenville, however, was not discouraged — she persevered — her invincible patience, and the indestructible sweetness of temper, with which, for the twentieth time, she explained the same obvious rule, were at length rewarded by success — at least by partial success. —Mrs. Bentley never accomplished arranging the pieces — and if, by any accident, the tables were turned, she was instantly plunged into a state of inconceivable and hopeless perplexity; but when once these preliminaries were adjusted, and she was fairly set off, she really played the game tolerably.—Constance always called this achievement of Mrs. Grenville's the triumph of virtue — and, indeed, it was felt to be a public benefit. — Many a long story, and many a long hour, did this acquisition shorten — Caroline Lennox was especially grateful; for Mrs. Bentley, as the widow of the late incumbent of the parish, had a claim upon the kindness and hospitality of

Lady Lennox, which was duly remembered; and the carriage generally fetched her about once a fortnight, to pass a day at the Manor House.

The attentions of Sir Henry were naturally confined to a civil enquiry, a passing observation, or the offer of his arm to the dining-room; and from the silent habits and delicate health of Lady Lennox, Mrs. Bentley was apt to devolve upon Caroline, rather more than could be agreeable to a young person — of this, Lady Lennox was aware.

"She will bring her worsted-work, you know, my dear" — she used to say, in a consolatory accent to her daughter — but still the hours had a sad trick of lingering; and Caroline found a hit at backgammon, in the evening, an inexpressible relief. — Constance always considered Mrs. Bentley as one of the few grievances of the Manor House — however, there was no altering the circumstances of the case: — there she frequently was, in all her dulness, to be endured and entertained.

To return to Mrs. Somers. — Half-a-dozen steps from Mrs. Grenville's gate, she encountered the rector.

"Good morning to you, Mr. Mortimer — bound to the Priory, I *do* suppose," said she.

"No, I cannot indulge myself this morning," was the reply.

"I would not recommend it, if you have any business," returned the lady, "for there is no getting away. — Charming people, indeed, they are — I have had such a delightful chat with them. — Oh! my dear sir," said she, returning upon her steps, after she had exchanged adieus— "if you could spare time to look in upon poor Stokes — I know your labours of love are super-abundant — but if you could spare half an hour for Stokes, it would be a great charity — a sad reprobate fellow he has been, I am afraid — and no wonder — his father was just the same — set a horrid example — a sad old sinner as any in the parish. — I used to say, 'Stokes, pray where do you expect to go to?' — but, if you could just look in upon young Stokes, as I call him, though he is not particularly young now — I dare say he is not much short of fifty — but time slips away so."

"It does, indeed," replied Mr. Mortimer, with somewhat of an arch emphasis. — "I have seen Stokes to-day," added he.

"Oh! you have — ah! as I say, always at your post. — Well, good morning — I will not detain you — your time is too precious, I am sure."

Mr. Mortimer escaped — but the voice of Mrs. Somers soon reached his ear, cheerfully greeting some passing acquaintance.

CHAP. XIX.

" How beauteous are the feet of those who bear
Mercy to man, glad tidings to despair;
Far from the mountain's top they lovelier seem
Than moonlight dews or morning's rosy beam;
Sweeter the voice than spell or hymning sphere —
And list'ning angels hush their harps to hear."

HEBER.

THE eulogium which Mrs. Somers had pronounced on Mr. Mortimer, was but a just tribute to his worth. The parish of Elton enjoyed that invaluable blessing, a conscientious, intelligent pastor, thoroughly devoted to the duties of his office, and the interests of his flock.

In the morning of life he had mixed with the great and learned; yet he found nothing irksome in the retirement of a country village. His, was that genuine love of nature which takes a real delight in her waving woods, sparkling streams, and scented flowers —

" The dewy morn,
With breath all incense, and with cheek all bloom,"

the soft stillness of evening, with her lovely star — the living glories of the sky, amidst the

hush of night, — were to him unfailing springs of enjoyment.

For a few years, he had been permitted to contemplate them in the society of one, whom he had loved with pure and tender love — and with these scenes her image was still associated; — it blended with his holiest feelings; for theirs had been

> "That blest and sacred tie, that binds
> In union sweet according minds."

Many a year had finished its course since that tender tie was broken — the struggle of grief and resignation had long been succeeded by a holy calm — and now, while contemplating the loveliness of nature in the deep quietude of her pathless woods, or at the still hour of evening, all mournful recollections were lost in the tender hope of an eternal re-union.

The education of his very promising son had been an interesting object for a few years. — Gerard Mortimer had scarcely passed a day from his father, till his dismissal to Winchester, and subsequent residence at Oxford, had occasioned a temporary separation.

To Mr. Mortimer's love of nature, was superadded a keen relish of classic lore, and old divinity, and great skill in gardening. The learned author, and deep divine, were frequently rivalled by the spade and pruning-knife. Many were his confabulations with the intelligent Scotchman who was head-gardener at the Manor House; and often were they seen in deep debate upon the sickly appearance of a moor-park apricot, or a cassan pear. Mr. Mortimer piqued himself upon his fine early vegetables, and his glowing fruits and flowers — the choicest of these fruits, indeed, were generally transferred to some one of his parishioners whose sickly palate was to be tempted; and his flowers and vegetables made their way to those who could rear none — there was a kindness and consideration in his acts of courtesy, which gave them tenfold value. Never, indeed, was pastor more beloved — he realised Chaucer's exquisite picture of a parish priest: —

"He bore his great commission in his look,
But sweetly temper'd awe, and soften'd all he spoke.
He preach'd the joys of heaven, and pains of hell,
And warn'd the sinner with becoming zeal,
But on eternal mercy loved to dwell:

He taught the Gospel rather than the Law,
And forced himself to drive, but loved to draw:
For, letting down the golden chain from high,
He drew his audience upward to the sky;
Lightnings and thunder (heaven's artillery),
As harbingers, before the Almighty fly —
These but proclaim his style, and disappear;
The stiller sound succeeds — and God is there.

* * * * * * * * *

His preaching much, but more his practice wrought —
A living sermon of the truths he taught."

In embracing the clerical profession, Mr. Mortimer had been actuated by higher views and better feelings than any connected with worldly advantage. To be the humble means of bringing many to righteousness, he considered at once his highest distinction, and dearest privilege; and taking a comprehensive view of the duties of his pastoral office, he felt that much might be done by personal and kindly intercourse with every class of his parishioners: — he knew that whatever barriers refinement and education created between them as intellectual creatures, there was a common ground on which they all met — they were fellow-sinners; and must frequently, in a world like this, be fellow-sufferers: — he knew that in the hour of deep affliction the voice of a com-

parative stranger, appearing only in his official character, was little likely to be welcome or soothing — his intercourse, therefore, was confined neither to the rich nor to the poor, but he was personally acquainted with every family in his parish; and he rejoiced that its moderate extent permitted him to realise his own view of pastoral duties: — he encouraged his parishioners to apply to him in their temporal difficulties, and they were sure of his assistance, counsel, or sympathy — gradually he acquired their affection and confidence; his condescension, and amiability as a man, adding not a little to his influence as a pastor.

Without the slightest shade of austerity, without the least affectation of puritanical severity, he never forgot the *distinctness* of his position in society as a clergyman. In the frankness of cordial intimacy, amidst the cheerfulness of the most unbending moments, his clerical character was never forgotten; — but this consistent dignity of manner was so blended with kindliness of feeling, that, while it ensured respect, it won affection, and gave a pure, healthful, and happy tone to social intercourse.

Mr. Mortimer, in thus diffusing himself among his parishioners, made frequent sacrifices of his taste and inclination: — he was naturally studious and contemplative, and the solitude of his fire-side fostered this taste — his quiet study, his favourite authors, and favourite rambles, were sometimes relinquished with regret; but a quick sense of duty, a lively conviction of responsibility, checked this feeling; and he often declared that he who could postpone a work of charity or mercy was unworthy the privilege of performing it. Few, indeed, were better fitted than himself to be the messenger of grace to guilty man: —

> "At his control
> Despair and anguish fled the struggling soul."

Faithful, yet gentle, he was equally skilful in arousing conscience, and awakening hope: — he detected sin in its deep disguises, and displayed it in all its real malignity — he humbled the presumptuous, by analysing the virtues upon which they depended: — by tracing actions to their motives, the airy fabric raised by pride on the foundation of human merit crumbled to the dust — but if he probed the heart, it was with a

skilful, not a merciless hand; it was to cure, not to irritate; — gently and gradually he led the mind from conviction to penitence, from penitence to faith, from faith to hope; that hope, which ends in blissful fruition.

At the Priory, he was a frequent and welcome guest. — The tone of Mrs. Grenville's piety precisely harmonised with his own: — deep but unobtrusive, her active desire of doing good was at once stimulated by a wakeful conscience, and regulated by an enlightened judgment: — it had nothing of the bustling officiousness which mistakes activity for usefulness. Mrs. Grenville did not, by injudicious exertions, and an intemperate zeal, tacitly insinuate to her poor neighbours, that their spiritual interests were neglected by their spiritual guide; but with a deference which she considered due to Mr. Mortimer, directed her exertions in the channel which he thought most beneficial: — she did not waste her mental or pecuniary resources in "picturesque excursions into the wild and devious regions of charitable and religious enterprise;" but by confining them to a definite sphere, more effectually promoted the cause she had at heart — and while, to the utmost extent of her means,

she gave a cheerful tribute to those admirable institutions which are intended to diffuse the light of life through the dark corners of the earth, and to lessen the mass of moral evil in distant lands; she did not think it less important to support those excellent establishments which have the same valuable object in view in our own. — Her most unremitting exertions, however, were directed to the wants and woes of her own immediate neighbourhood. She was convinced that "those who diffuse the most happiness, and mitigate the most distress within their own circle, are the best friends to their country and to the world; since nothing more is necessary than for all men to imitate their conduct, to make the greatest part of the misery of the world cease in a moment."

The influence of Mrs. Grenville's quiet benevolence, of her prompt sympathy in the feelings and wants of others, was felt throughout the village of Elton: — her cheerful smile and gentle voice were every where welcome: — she had always some whisper of hope, some word of comfort to give; and generally left the heart lighter than she found it.

Constance contemplated her mother's character, as it unfolded in the minutiæ of every-day-life, with the deepest respect and admiration;—her goodness was so entirely without parade and ostentation, so beautiful in its simplicity; — her intellectual superiority was so meekly borne, so chastised by humility, so tempered by kindly feeling, that while it lent an inexpressible charm to the hours of social intercourse, it placed every one with whom she associated perfectly at their ease. If an occasional felicity of expression, "that native idiom of genius," recalled for a moment the sense of this superiority, it was but for a moment — her talents were forgotten in the loveliness of her virtues: a delightful spirit of true piety threw its harmonising tint over her whole character — "other endowments were as the exquisite beauty of the finest landscape; piety the sun, which gave them life and light, gilding the whole view."

CHAP. XX.

" 'Tis sure philosophy's absurdest dream
That heaven's intentions are not what they seem;
That only shadows are dispensed below,
And earth has no reality but woe." COWPER.

" Loves, friendships, hopes, and dear remembrances,
The kind embracings of the heart, and hours
Of happy thought, and smiles coming to tears,
And glories of the heaven, and starry cope
Above, and glories of the earth beneath;
These were the rays that wander'd through the gloom
Of mortal life; wells of the wilderness;
Redeeming features in the face of Time;
Sweet drops, that made the mixed cup of earth
A palatable draught." POLLOK.

MR. MORTIMER took a deep and affectionate interest in the young persons under his pastoral care; and he felt that an acquaintance with their habits and occupations materially assisted his influence. In the freedom of domestic intercourse, he could often strengthen the principles, correct the errors, or direct the taste of his young friends, far more successfully than he could have done had that influence been confined to his public professional labours:—he did

not consider it waste of time, therefore, to pass an hour by their work-table in the morning, or to join their social meetings in the evening.

Constance was one of his special favourites, and she looked up to him with affectionate deference.

"I have brought you the book I promised," said he, putting one into her hands, as he seated himself by the table round which the three ladies were assembled.

"Thank you, my dear sir," replied Constance, opening the volume, and glancing over its contents.

"It is a thick, closely-printed volume," said Mr. Mortimer, with a smile, in answer to an expressive look from Constance; "but I expect it to be carefully read and thought over: — do you promise obedience?"

"Certainly," returned she. — "I have been taught to obey my spiritual pastors and masters ever since I could lisp, so I hope I shall not be graceless enough to refuse it, now that I am arrived at years of discretion; but, perhaps, on such a morning as this, I may feel more inclined to shut it up, and study the beautiful book of nature."

" It is, indeed, a delicious morning," said Mrs. Grenville, throwing open the window, and contemplating, for some moments, in silent thankfulness, the quiet beauty of the scene around. — " What a lovely world we live in ! "

The sunny landscape, the dappled sky, the light summer air stealing odours from a thousand flowers — the hum of bees at their busy labours — all around was brightness and beauty.

" Yes, every sense is regaled," added Mr. Mortimer, " and the heart still more so."

" Ah ! sunshine and flowers are charming things," observed cousin Frances ; — " but there is no forgetting that clouds and winter will have their turn."

" Oh ! the contrast does but make the bright smile of spring more welcome," replied Mrs. Grenville : — " an endless summer would be wasted on me ; for I really enjoy the change ! "

" Well, I confess," said Constance, " I should prefer, if choice were possible, to have

> " No sorrow in my song,
> No winter in my year."

" The winter ! — Oh ! I would not give up the winter, that most social of seasons, for the

world!" said Mrs. Grenville: — "think of its blazing faggots; its long, snug, cozy evenings; its bright frosty mornings!"

"And pray think of its driving snows, and drenching rains," added Frances.

"Oh! they but endear our in-door pleasures, our fire-side enjoyments," replied Mrs. Grenville:—"there is the delightful hour of parlour twilight—that busy hour of memory and fancy—then comes the brisk stir that sets the fire blazing, and casts a glow upon the faces we most love circling round it, — then the 'shining store' is opened, and the pleasant tale, or magic lay, make 'the foot of time fall noiseless as if he trod on flowers.'"

"Your delightful pencil awakens many sweet recollections, my dear mother," said Constance; "but still I must prefer

> 'That glow of the sunshine, that balm of the air,
> Which steals to the heart, and makes all summer there.'

I should enjoy those lovely skies,

> 'Where the bee banquets on through a whole year of flowers.'"

"I am content to wait for eternal spring, till I can enjoy it in paradise," said Mrs. Grenville.

" To listen to your representations, we might suppose *this* world to be a paradise," observed cousin Frances:—"but, lovely as you seem to think it, I believe there are many who would gladly close their eyes and escape from it for ever."

" That is not the sentiment of a mind in health," said Mr. Mortimer. — " There are hours, indeed, of deep affliction, in which the faculty of suffering is developed in its full extent; and a sense of woe presses upon the heart when such a sentiment may escape — there are moments, when those sainted spirits, 'of whom the world is not worthy,' may long to be dismissed, and to enjoy their bright reward; — but I should think that good sense, and Christian principle, must be in a very languid state, when a disrelish or weariness of life is the predominant feeling."

" Such feelings are sanctioned by language, the truth of which you will not question!" said Frances: — " 'the flower that fades' — the 'tale that is told' — the 'shadow that continueth not' — express the brevity, and the worthlessness of life. — If the world be a desert, and the life of

man a pilgrimage to a better country, he may be forgiven for wishing that pilgrimage ended."

"But in this desert many a bright *Oasis* arises to gladden the eyes and heart," said Mr. Mortimer: — "many a kind voice cheers us on the way; — and the distant prospect, which opens to the eye of a Christian, is so glorious, that it throws a gleam even over the dreariest spots of our journey. — I recommend all my flock to adopt the motto used by the good old Bishop Hacket — 'serve God, and be cheerful.'"

"But is there not a great and unconquerable difference in natural temperament, my dear sir?" enquired Constance. — "Is there not a constitutional melancholy, which sometimes prevails even over the clearest convictions of reason and religion?"

"To be sure!" exclaimed Frances: — "the mental constitution varies as much as the physical one — there are sanguine people, for instance, who dress up the world in colours of their own devising, and then require us to echo their raptures, — alchemists, who want to persuade us they can turn the very stones into gold, and then wonder that sober people still consider them as worthless pebbles."

"There is a great, but not an unconquerable, difference in temperament," observed Mr. Mortimer. — "Indeed it is quite in vain to plead that there is no struggling against natural character, for this is the very struggle we are called upon to maintain; and it forms part of that discipline by which we are to be trained to Christian excellence — by which we shall grow unto perfection. —We are not placed in society to mar its enjoyments by the indulgence — the undisguised display of our natural defects,— but by vigilance and self-control to correct these defects, and increase the sum of its pleasures."

"Oh! if we are to go through the world battling with ourselves at every step, pray talk no more of enjoyment," said Frances: — "a state of warfare must be any thing but a state of felicity."

"But if there be the struggle, and the combat, there is also the pleasure of conquest," replied Mr. Mortimer, — "the cheering moment of victory, — and then we have such armour — such powerful assistance provided."

"Well! but let us look at things for a moment," said Frances, "in their simple reality; not invested with the colouring of pious en-

thusiasm — what but disappointment awaits us in the path of life? — There is a deceitful brightness in the morning, — hope throws a dazzling brilliancy over the opening scene, and the youthful eye contemplates it with fond delight, — but tint after tint vanishes away, making the prospect every hour more dim and cold; till, in a little while, we discover that the happy valley of our imagination is in truth a vale of tears."

"The sun that has risen on this vale of tears has altered its character," replied Mr. Mortimer. — "Blot out this sun, indeed, from the heavens, and the earth, with all its beautiful interchange of mountain and valley, wood and stream, would be but a dull and dreary wilderness."

"The conclusions of the most powerful minds are all on my side of the question," observed Frances. — "'Human life is a state in which much is to be endured, and little to be enjoyed,' said the great moralist of the last century; — and, 'all is vanity and vexation of spirit,' was said ages before, by the wisest of men: — my own experience confirms their decision. — On looking through the history of

my life, little presents itself, but a train of disappointed hopes, and blighted affections — friendships that proved but a name — pursuits that ended in weariness, and projects that ended in nothing. — I am heartily tired of the world, and its ways: — if you have the misfortune to be rich, you are tormented with servility; if you have the misfortune to be poor, you are disgusted with pride; — caprice, hypocrisy, and ingratitude meet you at every turn."

"Do we not," said Mr. Mortimer, "expect too much from the world, and exact too little from ourselves? — I believe that happiness depends incalculably more upon self-correction and self-government, than on any combination of circumstances or events; — this, however, we are not willing to allow; — we fancy, that if we could control certain events, we should no longer sigh for happiness. Now the great art is to make circumstances contribute to happiness, and not happiness dependent upon circumstances."

"Your theory sounds well, but, like many other theories, it is impracticable," returned Frances :— "while we have hearts and feelings, they must be wounded by neglect, and irritated

by ingratitude and caprice; constituted as we are, it is impossible that happiness should not depend upon circumstances."

"It is impossible that it should not be *affected* by circumstances," replied Mr. Mortimer; "but where the mind is under the control of Christian principles, it will not be dependent upon them.—In its collision with human error and infirmity, the charity that suffereth long and is kind will interpose its gentle influence; and, under the pressure of the many evils and sorrows of life, the thorough conviction that afflictions spring not from the dust, will soothe, and calm, and reconcile.—Self-regulation upon Christian principle is one of the great secrets of happiness."

"Ah! some people are endued by nature with a quickness of sensibility — a keenness of feeling, which the less sensitive cannot even comprehend," said Frances: — "as well might you expect a person born deaf to thrill with emotion at an exquisite melody!"

"But I have observed," replied Mr. Mortimer, "that the keenness of feeling to which certain persons pretend, by no means quickens their sympathy for others, but is very apt to display itself in an exaggerated view of their

own claims, and to concentrate into a sort of intense selfishness."

"Selfishness!" echoed Frances: — "that I am sure is a most unwarrantable conclusion: — these are precisely the persons who are capable of the most generous exertions and sacrifices."

"Perhaps selfishness in its most obnoxious sense may be too strong a term," said Mr. Mortimer; "but, amidst these occasional exertions and sacrifices, their perpetual self-reference is but too apparent; — it frequently chills the generosity of their feelings, and sullies the disinterestedness of their kindest actions: — they are exacting and tenacious, even in their benevolent moods; — the gratitude they excite must be regulated by their own thermometer, and, unless we luckily hit upon the happy degree of temperature, we may unconsciously inflict the most cruel mortification."

"Well, — it is very trying," observed Frances, "to meet either with heartless coldness, or exaggerated expressions of gratitude; — the latter extreme, indeed, I think quite insulting, — and I have no patience either with the bad taste in one case, or the bad feeling in the other; — but

if there is any thing I have a peculiar dread of, it is an over-do of gratitude."

"And yet this apparent *over-do* may only be the effervescence of warm and strong feeling," observed Mrs. Grenville. — "It is astonishing how much injustice is done in the daily intercourse of life, by making our own temperament and taste the standard by which we measure the feelings of those around us; — it is certainly exercising as unwarrantable a tyranny over moral, as Procrustes did over physical nature, — and it is the fruitful source of sudden alienations and groundless enmities."

"Yes," said Mr. Mortimer; "the stream of life is thus embittered and impeded by our own agency; — we busy ourselves in raising up a rock of offence, and then complain that the waters are turbid and tumultuous; — we throw a tree of bitterness into the stream, and then murmur at the taste which it infuses."

"I believe," said Frances, "that there are few persons, whatever may have been their station, character, or disposition, who have not found the stream of life full of bitterness, without any particular agency of their own: — it is a complaint that has been made — echoed, and

re-echoed — ever since the creation; and I cannot think why you trouble yourself to combat such a self-evident truth."

"I must combat that morbid view," returned Mr. Mortimer, "which induces a false estimate of the value of life, which would make us ungrateful for so precious a boon:—if its trials were multiplied a thousand-fold, and its enjoyments curtailed in the same proportion, I should still consider it a gift of unspeakable value.—As a Christian, indeed, how can I do otherwise?—Is the capacity of attaining a glorious immortality so poor a privilege, so worthless a gift, that it is to be thought of with cold and thankless indifference?"

"It seems far more natural," said Mrs. Grenville, "that it should fill the heart, even to overflowing, with emotions of fervent and holy gratitude:" — tears stood in her eyes, and her whole countenance indicated the deepest feeling.

"Oh! you have a sort of enthusiasm of character, that gives an artificial glow to life and its capabilities," returned Frances; — "that however does not alter the real state of the case."

"It is the light that Heaven itself has deigned to give," observed Mr. Mortimer; "and

it can make the wilderness to blossom as the rose. If we do at all believe in the views which Christianity reveals, and that this life is indeed a scene of probation,—how grateful should we be that it is still so rich in sources of enjoyment!—The loveliness of nature, the sweet ties of kindred and friendship,—how pure, how delightful are the pleasures they procure!—and even when our sympathies are excited by the sorrows and sufferings of humanity, there is a counterbalancing relief in the prompt benevolence and active usefulness which they call forth."

"Then the exhaustless variety of intellectual gratification which we can command," said Mrs. Grenville:—"nature, art, and science, lend their united aid. Genius and taste pour forth their treasures. Imagination indulges us with her delicious freaks and fancies: she makes earth, and sea, and air, her tributaries; and every mountain and stream live in her lovely song, and are peopled with her beautiful creations.—We, who live in this age of books, literature, and religious light, have a thousand springs of enjoyment revealed to us, which lay hidden and buried amid the rubbish of igno-

rance in former times, and gratefully ought we to enjoy them."

"You are certainly skilled in delineating the *bright side of the picture*, my dearest mother," said Constance, with an affectionate smile: — "what a soft, bright, sunny scene do you make of this world of ours in your glowing landscape! — you are a Claude, and cousin Frances a Salvator."

"No, dear Constance," replied Mrs. Grenville; — "my world, as well as that of Frances, has its portion of gloom and shade — of cloud and storm — but then I remember by whose hand they are distributed, and that when the fair scene is saddened, it is for some purpose of love and mercy; — but I delight to dwell upon my blessings in their detail, their variety, their profusion: — it gives such a healthy glow to the heart; — they are so undeserved, and yet so unremitted; — such pledges of love, such proofs of benevolence, such a promise of yet greater things: — surely they may well claim the gladness of a cheerful spirit."

"I do not think the cultivation of such a spirit is sufficiently considered as forming part of the duty of a Christian," observed Mr. Mortimer;

" now I believe it constitutes a very material part: it recommends religion to the world in general, and it gives a brightness and a charm to domestic life. Piety with her skull and cross-bones — her hair-cloth, scourges, and tearful countenance, — was a very repulsive personage; — but Piety with her gentle silver tones of kindness, her hand of helpfulness, her glad smile, and eyes, full of grateful hope, fixed on Heaven, is attractive and beautiful. Cheerfulness ought to be one of the attributes of Christian piety.

" Well, I can only say," exclaimed Cousin Frances, after a short pause, " happy are they who can find so much to be cheerful about in this world; — they have been born under some lucky planet, and may thank their stars: — but every body is not so fortunate."

Reasoning with Frances was very much like rolling a stone up hill — hopeless and useless labour; she generally returned precisely to the point whence she had started, with a pertinacity the most invincible.

" Well, my dear madam," said Mr. Mortimer, turning to Mrs. Grenville, " you must not beguile me into neglecting my duties — I promised to be at the school early this morning."

"Oh, just let me show you some lines on the subject we have been talking of," said Constance, "and I will have the pleasure of accompanying you."

"Do so, my dear," replied he; "and remember that usefulness is the element in which a cheerful spirit is sustained. A life of active exertion, of well-regulated energy; a humble mind, and a heart of faith and love, will convert the mountain of misery into a peaceful valley. — And now we must be going, so indulge me with the lines as soon as you please."

"Here they are," returned Constance, opening a portfolio: — "I will read only a few of my favourite stanzas: —

THE BRIGHT SIDE OF THE PICTURE;

ADDRESSED TO THOSE WHO ASSERT THAT

'Life has no reality but woe.'

Oh! say not so — although to man
No longer it is given,
To breathe the gales of Paradise,
And hear the strains of Heaven; —
Though sin has shed her withering blight,
On all that once was fair and bright;
And each his pilgrim path must tread,
Where thorns and briars are thickly spread;
Yet many a floweret, in its bloom,
Flings o'er this path its rich perfume;

And many a spot of brightest green,
To gem the wilderness, is seen.

* * * * * *
* * * * * *

And who that has a heart to feel
The grateful throb — the ecstatic glow,
Can to their griefs alone appeal,
Blind to the antidotes of woe?
Though mingled hues of various shade
Are in the web of life display'd,
How dull that eye! how cold that breast!
Which on the darkest loves to rest; —
Or where the brightest shines most bright,
Decries it as delusive light.
When Nature, in her loveliest guise,
Unveils to our admiring eyes;
When zephyrs from their balmy wing
A thousand breathing odours fling,
While thrilling concerts fill the grove,
Awakening every sense to love; —
When Summer decks her sunny bowers,
And, smiling, wreathes her gayest flowers; —
When Autumn, from her golden stores,
Her gifts in rich profusion pours; —
When all is beautiful and bright: —
Are these but *shadows* of delight?

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And there are dearer blessings yet,
Which grateful hearts can ne'er forget:
Friendship, whose sympathetic power
Can soothe affliction's saddest hour,
Shed over life a ray divine —
Exalt, ennoble, and refine; —
— And Love's still warmer, brighter flame,
(Though oft profaned its sacred name)

The sweetest bliss to mortals given —
A bliss that seems to breathe of heaven: —
Are these pure joys an idle theme? —
Friendship and Love! — are these a *dream?*

And does not Hope her prospects clear,
And fairy tints display,
Lending her lovely light to cheer
The dull and dreary way? —
And does not Faith, with eager eye
Piercing the cloudy veil,
Behold a heaven beyond the sky,
And all its glories hail? —
And does not Christian Love excite
Feelings, which in themselves are bliss?
Does she not brighten sorrow's night,
And make a sunny world of this?

Sweet Piety! thy power alone
Can give all other joys their tone;
Thy heavenly smile alone impart
That constant cheerfulness of heart,
Which, like a ceaseless hymn of praise,
To Heaven its grateful tribute pays:
Thou bidd'st us cull the fragrant rose,
Though tangling thorns its stem surround;
And hail each hour of soft repose,
Though the dark tempest gathers round;
For God who bade, with power divine,
The thorn to pierce, the storm to blow —
He also gave the sun to shine;
He also gave the rose to blow."

CHAP. XXI.

" He cannot properly be chosen for a friend whose kindness is exhaled by its own warmth; nor can the candour and frankness of that person be much esteemed, who spreads his arms to human kind, and makes every man, without distinction, a denizen of his bosom." DR. JOHNSON.

As Mr. Mortimer and Constance pursued their way to the school, they paused for a few minutes to exchange salutations with Mrs. Courtland, a lady residing in the neighbourhood: — she held a letter in her hand, and her face wore a disquieted expression.

" Shall I find Mrs. Grenville at home, and disengaged?" said she. — " I have a little business to consult her upon, — and, indeed, a favour to beg — but I will not trouble you on the subject."

" You will find mamma quite at leisure," replied Constance: — " I would return with you, but I am going with Mr. Mortimer to the school."

"Ah! very right, indeed," returned Mrs. Courtland: — "I am sure I wish I had leisure to be as good as you; — now is the time, indeed, before you are immersed in the cares of the world."

"To be immersed in such cares can never be a duty, at any period of life," observed Mr. Mortimer.

"Why, no, that is very true," returned Mrs. Courtland; "no one can feel more than I do the truth of all you say, Mr. Mortimer; — and I do hope the day will come, when I shall be able to sit down quietly and think. — I certainly look forward to it with real pleasure, though I suspect you don't believe me," continued she, shaking hands warmly with him, and pursuing her way.

"To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow," said Mr. Mortimer; — "and so our little life creeps on."

The day of quietness and thought was indeed likely to remain in perspective with Mrs. Courtland. — Among the *dramatis personæ* of Elton she played no inconspicuous part. — Upon the whole, she was generally and deservedly liked; for there was much in this lady

that was popular in disposition, and attractive in manner; — her impulses were all kind, but were often acted upon with a want of judgment and discretion, that insured disappointment to herself, and those she desired to serve: — there was another inconvenience, too, in these impulsive feelings, — the supply was apt to be exhausted by the rapidity of the first gush, — her sympathies were as evanescent as they were ardent; — indeed, had they not been prone to subside, "mortal mixture of earth's mould" could never have supported such wear and tear; for her kindness was of the most exuberant and diffusive nature, — it comprehended not only the friend of a friend, but the acquaintance of an acquaintance — it was the very quixotism of courtesy.

Now Mrs. Courtland might have stood excused, had she devoted far less of her heart and time to mankind in general, for the natural claims on her sympathies were not a few: — her own family consisted of one son and three daughters, all married and settled in different parts of England.

At the death of Mr. Courtland, the family mansion and estate descended to his son; and

Mrs. Courtland had retired, with a moderate income, to a moderate house in the village of Elton. — The capacity of her house was not, however, proportioned to the capacity of her heart: — she still wished the home where she presided to be the central point of attraction to her friends, — and friends' friends, — and to this group of sons and daughters, with children of all ages, from one to fifteen. — She was consequently very often entangled by conflicting engagements, the result of rash invitations, which she had hazarded at the same time, and with the same urgency, to different friends and members of her family; — then came such harassing perplexities — such balancing difficulties — such distracting impossibilities: — it was impossible to put any body off, — and impossible to accommodate every body; — then her ingenuity and sincerity were taxed and exhausted, — and, after all, she was often afflicted by the sour faces of nurses and abigails, who, ungratefully insensible to the kindness of her contrivances, resented the size of her house, and the being pent up in close quarters, so little suited to the luxury of their habits, and the dignity of their feelings.

Still there was a fund of graciousness, both in the disposition and manner of Mrs. Courtland, that was extremely winning, — an abundance of little attentions, which established her character as an excellent neighbour, and won a considerable share of popular favour: — yet she tasted less positive enjoyment than most of her associates, — there was a certain restlessness even in her happiest feelings, that disturbed their completeness, — her character resembled a picture, in which the composition is not unpleasing, nor the execution bad, — but the charm of repose is wanting.

Mrs. Courtland loved popularity, and like all who seek and follow this Will-o'-the-wisp, she was occasionally thrown out in the chase, and disappointed. — 'Tis not in mortals to command success:' — her precipitate civilities and exuberant attentions were sometimes coldly rejected, or accepted and forgotten with provoking *nonchalance;* and not unfrequently in endeavouring to add one, to the circle of her dear five hundred friends, she found herself, after a prodigality of exertions, weary and worn, at the very point whence she had started: —

these were "insect vexations," but they disturbed and ruffled the stream of her life.

Now and then, too, Mrs. Courtland, from the diffusiveness of her nature, — the universality of her kindness, — disappointed and distanced some of her old friends: — they felt their claims merged in those of the public, — and it gave a check to the glow, and warmth, and individuality of feeling, which is the life of friendship. —The quality of her character, indeed, was excellent: — there was sterling gold; — but then, like that which is hammered out to show the divisibility of matter, it was beat into such thin lamina, that all solidity was lost, — it floated away with every breath.

Another fault arose out of this too keen love of popularity. — Mrs. Courtland was sometimes rather prone to "assent to all sorts of propositions, from all sorts of persons;" — without hypocrisy, or any systematic insincerity, — an unconquerable spirit of accommodation extended itself even to her opinions: — they were unstable as water, and like that element, reflected the hue of every passing object; — so rapidly, too, did these hues change, that the effect was somewhat bewildering; — it created a confusion which

dazzled the mental eye, and baffled the powers of memory: — there was light, certainly, in the understanding, but it seemed of little use to the possessor, — like a fire-balloon launched into space, it floated along, wavering and flickering, — now soaring, now diving, — veering about here, and there, and every where, at the mercy of the changing breeze.

Occasionally, when difficulties multiplied around her, she took counsel of Mrs. Grenville, who frequently managed to furnish her with a guiding clue, by which she might escape from the labyrinth.

"My dear Mrs. Grenville, I am come to put your kindness to the test," said she, seating herself on the sofa, with a harassed countenance, and opening the letter she held in her hand: — "this letter has perplexed me beyond measure, — yet I was delighted to receive it: — it is from Mrs. Wilmot, — a lady whom I met at Bath last year, and I was quite charmed with her, — indeed I believe, I may say, it was mutual: — we became great friends, and I could not bear to lose sight of her; — it would have been absolutely wrong, — for she is not at all an every-day sort of person: — I pressed her to come

into Hampshire this summer; and she proposes being here with Mr. and Miss Wilmot next Saturday: — now it will really be a delight to me to see them, — though I could have wished it at another moment, for they bring a carriage and servants, — and what they are all to be done with, I know not. — Mr. Wilmot is so particular about his horses, that I am sure the stables at the Fox will frighten him away directly: — my own are unfortunately pre-occupied with the Colonel's horses. — Fanny, who is always accommodating, suggested their taking their chance at the inn; — but men are so tiresome, and tenacious on this point, that the Colonel would not come into it: — I do wish people could be transported from place to place without horses and servants; — I am sure they are the torment of my life."

Mrs. Grenville immediately offered every accommodation, in the way of stabling, which the Priory could afford.

"You are very kind, indeed," replied Mrs. Courtland: — "it will be a great relief to my mind to have it so settled, — but I know it is not a small favour to ask; — I know it is not pleasant to have one's premises intruded on in

this way, and I am vexed with myself. — I ought to have managed better, for it is quite my own fault. — I gave Mrs. Wilmot *carte blanche:* — I said any time in the month of September I should be delighted to see her, — and so I shall be, I am sure: — she is a charming creature! She will suit your taste exactly; and I hope we shall have the pleasure of seeing a great deal of you while she is here. — I know but little of Mr. Wilmot and the daughter; — and, indeed, I did not much expect to see them," added she, in a confidential tone; — " but, however, I certainly did include them in my invitation: — you know it was not possible to leave them out, — was it?"

Mrs. Grenville smiled at this appeal: — her catalogue of impossibilities was far less extensive than Mrs. Courtland's. — " We will not talk over any other possibilities," said she, " than those of accommodation. — Can I do any thing for you in this way? — We have two beds unoccupied at present."

" No; — I hope I can manage without trespassing farther on your kindness," returned Mrs. Courtland. — " The Colonel and Fanny are in the blue room; — the nurse and children

in the chintz : — the white bed is unfortunately cleared off to make a day-nursery. — I did hint to nurse, that it would be a great convenience to me to have it up again, but she looked so cross and crabbed, that I could not venture ; — that class of people are so tiresome. — I am sure those five abigails Miss Edgeworth describes as driving off in a huff, because they had not peach pies for luncheon, are a capital specimen of the whole tribe ; — not a bit of a caricature. — Fanny's nurse is at the head of them, — the very queen of malecontents : — however, I am resolved not to mind it : — I am determined to be blind and deaf, — but it is very mortifying. — I must give up my own room, — which is not pleasant, — and, indeed, at my time of life, ought not to be. — I could have wished it otherwise ; — but so it must be, on account of the dressing-room. — Married people are so inconvenienced without a dressing-room. — I must betake myself to my snuggery, as I call it, — and Miss Wilmot must put up with something very little better. — I am rather uneasy about that, I confess ; — for, as I said before, I know very little of her ; and should she happen to be

fine, it will be distressing to put her in such a mere cabin."

"Oh," if she should happen to be *fine*," replied Mrs. Grenville, smiling, "it would immediately hush all my cares upon that point to sleep. — Young ladies who are fine are precisely the persons whom it is extremely salutary to shut up in a cabin now and then."

"Why, very true," replied Mrs. Courtland, trying to laugh: — "it must take its chance, — I cannot help it, — I shall endeavour to dismiss it all. — I hope," continued she, after a short pause, "that the Colonel and Mr. Wilmot will suit: — it is not every body, unluckily, that the Colonel fits in with. — Fanny I am always sure of, — but the Colonel has his preferences."

"He is not singular in that respect," observed Mrs. Grenville, smiling.

"No, — but then he discovers them so unnecessarily," replied Mrs. Courtland. — "When he heard that the Wilmots were expected, his first enquiry was, — 'What are they like?' — and then added, 'Had not you better have received us by instalments?' — Now I did not think it kind; — but, however, it must take its chance."

"And the chances are," said Mrs. Grenville, "that two well-bred men will contribute to each other's amusement in the retirement of a country village."

"Well, I hope so," returned Mrs. Courtland. — "The Colonel is a well-bred man, — and an excellent husband and father. — I always say that Fanny's lot is a happy one: — quite *couleur de rose*, in all essentials; — but then he likes his own way, — all the Fentons like their own way: — he is quite an Englishman in that respect, — and his way is not precisely like mine. — Though he has seen a great deal of the world, his manner with strangers is not altogether what I like: — there is a coldness in his good breeding, — a constraint in his courtesy, which is so English: — sometimes when very pleasant people, — very charming people, indeed, — have just said 'farewell,' and driven off, I have seen him walk about the house with a glad, relieved look, that has been quite provoking. — He has such a prejudice about old friends, — you would think friends were to be valued only like antiques, according to their dates; — now I think a gem is a gem, and worth possessing, even if it does not happen to

be one of the family jewels, with which we have been familiar from our childhood."

"Yes, a gem is always worth possessing," observed Mrs. Grenville; — "but in a hasty glance we may mistake Bristol stones for diamonds, beads for pearls, — and thus fill our cabinet, without enriching it."

"Yes, that is very true, —very true, indeed," returned Mrs. Courtland: — "I think it is perhaps better to make no new acquaintance."

"Why, that would be a rash determination," said Mrs. Grenville.

"Yes, as you say, it would be rash," replied Mrs. Courtland: — "in that case we might be left in the decline of life to solitude and a hermitage."

"There is not much fear of such a catastrophe in your case," said Mrs. Grenville, "if present appearances are to be trusted:— friends cluster round you as bees around their queen."

"Why, yes, rather an *embarras de richesses*, just now," added Mrs. Courtland;—"however, it must take its chance; and I am sure, as I said before, I shall be delighted to see them."

But never did felicity wear a less felicitous aspect. Mrs. Courtland was evidently suffering under the idea that her accommodations would not be sufficiently *accommodating;* — and, strange to say, she had a sort of injured look and feeling, at the accomplishment of her own reiterated wishes, — of her own pet schemes.

CHAP. XXII.

" In Mauchline there dwells three proper young belles,
The pride of the place and its neighbourhood a';
Their carriage and dress, a stranger would guess,
In Lon'on or Paris they'd gotten it a'.

BURNS.

"I HAVE heard news during my walk," exclaimed Constance on her return; — "very interesting to the village in general, I dare say, but not particularly exhilarating to me."

"What is it?" enquired Mrs. Grenville.

"Why, these Twyfords are really coming,— in what force I know not; — but two precursors have arrived, in the shape of a footman and a cook; and the family are to be at Elton in a few days."

"We must wait with all patience for the interesting particulars," said Mrs. Grenville, smiling.

"Yes, we shall hear of nothing but the Twyfords for the next two months," returned Constance.

"I sympathise entirely with you, Constance," observed cousin Frances, — "the arrival of a new family in the neighbourhood is quite a trial;—really the fuss that is made about new people is perfectly absurd. — The Talbots settled near Fairfield about three months ago, and a very respectable, well-connected family they are, and very pleasant people they may be, for aught I know; but the Fairfield neighbourhood took the liberty of wondering that I did not call — can you conceive of such impertinence? —so I determined to come here without paying the visit at all—just to prove to the world at Fairfield that I should call when I chose, and no sooner:—at my time of life, to be dictated to by the neighbourhood is rather too preposterous."

Cousin Frances's estimate of the privileges attached to her time of life was exceedingly apt to vary; sometimes she availed herself of them to their full extent, — at others, the least hint of her claim to such consideration was an unpardonable offence.

"Yes, yes," resumed Constance; "we shall hear enough of the Twyfords: — nothing else will be talked of in the village. — Mrs. So-

mers will discover that they are twentieth cousins to the Twyfords of Dorsetshire; and in reverence for that august family, the whole host of Elton will make a precipitate incursion upon the new settlers.—Alas! for Mr. Twyford: he little dreams, poor man, of the ordeal he has to go through. In the first place, there is that '*wearyful*' woman, Mrs. Somers. I really do not think even Miss Mitford's talking lady could equal her: — how she will beset him with her grandmother, and his far-off cousin Grace; — but perhaps," continued Constance, a gleam of pleasure lighting up her face at the hope, — "perhaps you will not think it necessary to call?"

"I shall think it quite necessary to pay every body the civilities their station in life may claim," returned Mrs. Grenville.

"Oh, what a long, dull perspective does that polite determination conjure before me," said Constance, sighing: — "the parties — the tiresome parties — that every body will think it right to give and to go to. There will be Mrs. Jones contriving a squeezy quadrille — and Mrs. Bentley getting up a concert with three performers. Oh, I really think I must have a

sore throat, just a slight sore throat, during the reign of the Twyfords — and you will not think it prudent that I should expose myself to the *evening air*."

"This is badinage, I know," said Mrs. Grenville: — "subterfuge of any kind would be the last expedient adopted by Constance."

"Oh, that it were justifiable!" exclaimed she: — "now a father confessor would be a treasure in these cases — so much more manageable than you, my dear mother."

"Or than your own conscience," interrupted Mrs. Grenville.

"Indulgences and absolutions would be so convenient," pursued Constance; — "nay, even a gentle penance would be welcome. — I am sure repeating Ave-marias, and counting one's beads, would be luxury, compared with the fatigue, and fritter, and frippery of a dozen heartless, monotonous parties. — I dare say these Twyfords are coming *en masse:* — there will be a mamma and a train of daughters — and the whole Elton world will echo with the description of Mrs. Twyford's Brussels lace — and Mrs. Twyford's sweet turban — and Miss Twyford's amethysts, and Miss Eliza's pearls.— Oh, I can hear it all!"

These melancholy prognostics were but too soon realised.— Mrs. Somers, full of the reminiscences of her early days, contrived an immediate interview with Mr. Twyford, and found him extremely ready to confirm her belief in his affinity to the Twyfords of Dorsetshire. There certainly was a cousinship between them; — and Mr. Twyford listened to the history of Grace with a very recollective aspect: — the legend was current in the family in the days of his boyhood: — since that period he had lost sight of the Twyfords of Dorsetshire: — they were peculiar, — and kept up but little intercourse with the remote branches of the family; and then the north of England and Dorsetshire were so geographically separated — and Mr. Twyford being a family man, had little temptation to leave home. He begged to introduce Mrs. Twyford and her daughters: — nothing could be more satisfactory than the bowings and courtseyings, the hopes and assurances, exchanged at this interesting moment;— and the result was all that could be wished. — Mrs. Somers left the house with the conviction that the Twyfords would be a great acquisition to the neighbourhood, — and stopped a moment at the Priory on her way, to say that the young ladies would

be charming companions for her dear young friend, Miss Constance.

The news spread rapidly through Elton; and, on the following Sunday, an eager glance of curiosity and hope was directed to Mr. Kingston's pew, which report had appropriated to the new comers: — the hope proved delusive, for all was vacuity: — another week passed away, and the pew, rich in the glory of crimson cushions and a Brussels carpet, excited very lively expectations: — again, alas! no Twyfords appeared: — the third Sunday, however, was more propitious; — the lady and gentleman, with their three daughters, bright in smiles and finery, satisfied the longing eyes of the public. They made a powerful impression; — and during the ensuing week, — "Have you seen the Twyfords?" — "When do you call on the Twyfords?" — "How do you like the Twyfords?" — echoed from all quarters.

There would have been a sad waste of exertion, indeed, if this family had not been talked of; for they evidently intended to make a sensation, and to take the lead in the village which they had honoured with their selection.

Mrs. Somers issued her cards with all speed — and every body crowded to see and be seen by the

Twyfords. At an hour somewhat later than the world in general, they joined the party — the lady moving through the collected circle with condescending suavity — the daughters remarkable for a profusion of curls and consequence: — they talked much of the north; — and sundry great names, dexterously mixed up with their familiar recollections, produced an imposing effect on their country auditors.

Mrs. Grenville, indeed, was not dazzled, — there was something of pretension about the female party, — and a certain jocularity in the manners of the gentleman, which assisted her in determining their natural class in society. — This silent decision, however, interfered not with their popularity, — nothing could be more unanimous than the admiration they excited. Mrs. Twyford's expansive figure, burnished and glittering, became a card-table exceedingly, — her turban and her temper — her rings and her smiles — were equally admired. The Misses Twyford were referred to, in all matters of taste and fashion, and they shook their ambrosial curls, and gave the nod, with the dignity and decision of an oracle. Oh, they were charming girls! — and Mrs. Twyford so affable!

To this praise of Mrs. Twyford's affability Constance was apt to listen with a smile — it was a virtue she thought few persons in the middle rank of life entitled to practise in society; — and among the few, she certainly did not number Mrs. Twyford. The tide of popularity, however, continued to flow on without impediment or interruption.

It was very confidently predicted in the village, that Constance and the Misses Twyford would become great friends — they were such accomplished girls! — What was it, indeed, that the Misses Twyford could not do? — Besides flirting, which was their regular vocation, they played, and sung, and sketched from nature, and japanned skreens, and made Spa baskets, rice flowers, and gum seals: — their inveterate industry was quite edifying! it was the talk of the village. — Strange that Constance could resist such a rich combination of attainments; — but she had rather exalted notions of "that boon to men and angels only given," and felt no indication of the sympathy that precedes friendship. There was, indeed, little harmony of taste between the young ladies. Whenever the Misses Twyford were *ad libitum* — when-

ever the "elderly bipeds were playing a pool," or discussing the state of the nation, and they could ensconce themselves in the recess of a window, or intrench in a snug corner, their talk was invariably of balls and beaux, — of delightful creatures, whom they had delighted, — and of captains whom they had conquered.

A strong family likeness prevailed among the sisters, as far as that character met the public eye; but upon closer examination, varieties were discoverable. Jessy, the second sister, was distressingly tender and sentimental in a *tête-à-tête* — sighed as she passed a tuft of *forget-me-not* — and picked up a faded leaf very expressively. — Constance discovered this peculiarity on their second visit at the Priory; when the heat of an August evening invited the young party to take a twilight stroll about the grounds. Jessy linked her arm within that of Constance, took care to avoid the path her sisters had chosen; and soon hinted, that "the hour when daylight dies," dear as it must be to all persons of taste and feeling, was, from certain delicate and delicious associations, peculiarly so to her: — the observation closed with a sigh — and a pause

succeeded, which Constance was extremely puzzled to fill up.

That this was the prelude to a tale of love and woe, appeared too probable — not that such a theme could be unwelcome to Constance. — At three-and-twenty, a tale of this sort falls pleasantly on the ear; and had it been whispered by the familiar voice of friendship, it would have awakened a thrill of sympathy in her young heart; — but confidence of this kind from a stranger disturbed her preconceived notions on the subject.

Constance had hitherto known nothing of love: — she had inspired it again and again; but gratitude had been the warmest feeling that had been awakened in return; nor was it even that glow of gratitude, which is so often the spring of woman's love; but a cold, civil feeling, that could not kindle a spark of hope even in the most sanguine. Her theory, however, on the subject, was at present in excellent taste: — if ever she did love, the sentiment was to be tender, pure, disinterested, devoted — of a nature that precluded the possibility of change or decay; and above all, the secret charm, the

tender spell, the name of magic power, would be enshrined within her own breast,

> " With pious ardour worshipp'd there,
> And never mention'd but in prayer."

Amourettes were certainly incompatible with such a theory; — indeed they always remained an unintelligible mystery to Constance; but incomprehensible as they were, she found that such things could be:— she discovered that Jessy had undergone a succession of attachments: — they had come on, and gone off, like a fit of the gout, or a cold in the head; but for the time being, they had been serious affairs: — such alternations of love, and hope, and despair,— and then a vacuum — a dreary void, that could be filled only by love in a new form: — altogether, it was an affecting history.

A suitable expression of sympathy would have been rather a difficult task, but happily this was by no means necessary — Jessy was contented to be listened to: — it was sufficient gratification to be the heroine of her own tale, to proclaim the power of her charms, and the susceptibility of her nature: — she contrived, indeed, to edge in a compliment to Constance, on

the expressive sensibility of her countenance, which invited to confidence; and the conference ended with a silent pressure of her hand, and a pensive air, which was gradually exchanged in the drawing-room for a gay coquettish smile, and all the gesture and flutter of habitual flirtation.

Little as the taste of the Misses Twyford blended with that of the inmates of the Priory, they found it expedient to be on a friendly footing there — it was desirable ground to occupy occasionally. The village of Elton, however faultless it might appear to the lovers of picturesque beauty — though it might have been apostrophised, as "the loveliest village of the plain," had one capital defect, in the eyes of these young ladies, — it was by no means redundant in beaux: — this was a serious drawback to their felicity. — "Where none admire, 'tis useless to excel." — Mrs. Bentley, indeed, possessed two nephews, who, when they could be spared from a counting-house and lawyer's office in London, might occasionally be seen with guns over their shoulders, among the woods and groves of Elton, — and Mrs. Jones had a grandson at Cambridge, who sometimes paid her a visit; —

now and then, too, a stray young man might be seen at Mrs. Courtland's,—but they were all birds of passage,—fugitives that must be shot flying, if shot at all, — and there was scarcely time to take aim.

Mr. Maddocks, the medical man, a decidedly pleasant person, had unluckily married a few months before, and was so occupied with his pretty wife, that bright eyes and bright smiles were thrown away upon him.

The Rectory contained only Mr. Mortimer, and he was a *pastor fido*, upon whom the whole artillery of gentle blandishments would be sadly wasted: there was a dawn of hope, however, in this quarter. Gerard Mortimer was shortly expected: — his college career was about to close, and he was coming with all "his blushing honours thick upon him."

Under the present melancholy dearth of the village, the attractions of the Priory appeared in a striking point of view. The Lennox's, who were to be seen no where else, were often found there, and now and then a promising scion from some of the county families was luckily encountered in a morning call. — Constance was considered a very enviable creature; — but it was

provoking to see these treasures so wasted upon her — to observe the indifference with which she witnessed the exits and entrances of these *raræ aves*, and her strange insensibility to the felicity of her lot: — it was scarcely credible, but according to Jessy Twyford's account, she had actually been detected one day, when young Berkley rode up, in whispering, "How tiresome! I am afraid he will prevent our walk;" — that she should prefer a stroll down a lane with her mother, — her own every-day mother, to a nice rattle with that *love of a man!* — it provoked Jessy to moralise over the unequal distribution of the good things of this life, and the ingratitude of the human heart that could be insensible to such blessings. If the Twyfords were uninteresting to Constance — Constance, in her turn, was incomprehensible to the Twyfords.

CHAP. XXIII.

" For him the spring
Distils her dews, and from the silken gem
Of Autumn tinges ev'ry fertile branch
With blooming gold, and blushes like the morn.
Each passing hour sheds tribute from her wings,
And still new beauties meet his lonely walk,
And loves unfelt attract him. Not a breeze
Flies o'er the meadow ; not a cloud imbibes
The setting sun's effulgence ; not a strain
From all the tenants of the warbling shade
Ascends, but whence his bosom can partake
Fresh pleasure unreproved."

AKENSIDE.

In a very few days Gerard Mortimer arrived. Those only who have lived in a land of dearth and desolation can duly estimate the worth of such an event, — can truly sympathize in the feelings of joy and hope which filled the hearts and flushed the cheeks of the fair daughters of Twyford, on hearing that he was actually installed at the Rectory for an indefinite period. — With particulars as to his manners and appearance they were unacquainted : — they knew he was young, — they heard he was clever, and

they hoped he was handsome. — At any rate, he was safe at the Rectory, and must be an improvement upon his father. — The possibilities of the case were all animating, — he might flirt and be amusing, — he might fall in love and marry. Who does not welcome the whispers of hope?

The unconscious subject of these cheering speculations dreamed not that any fair lady could waste a thought or a hope upon him. — He was singularly modest and unpretending: — true, the fire of genius lighted up his eye, but it was tempered by the piety that filled his heart; indeed, had not the ballast of sound religious principle been carefully supplied, the bewitching influence of imagination might have wrought him mickle woe: — he loved to wander in the world of poetry and fancy — to linger amidst its pure and beautiful scenes, and revel in golden visions and romantic dreams: — his ear was attuned to all the exquisite melodies of nature, — his eye caught every fugitive beauty, every delicate touch of her unrivalled pencil. — There was an intensity in his intellectual sensibilities, — a fervour in his admiration, — which tempted him to woo and worship her in the

silence of her loneliest haunts,' and to muse on her magic loveliness, in all the luxury of abstraction and reverie; — and in such luxury, the golden hours of life's fleeting morning might have stolen away, had not the strong regulating principle of Christianity interposed its holy influence: — it extinguished not his youthful ardour, — it did not dim the bright flame of genius, — but purified and directed it, and sent it kindling up to heaven!

Not only did it impart a purity of moral taste, which protected him from vulgar dissipation, but it taught him that the dreamy beauty of the poets' visions, the vivid raptures of intellectual enjoyment, are but as the luscious drops of an enchanted cup, if they disqualify for the serious duties and purposes of life; — it taught him that enlightened and diffusive usefulness is the noblest object of the human mind, and that "a Christian is the highest style of man."

Thus, while keenly alive to the charms of literature, the sweet warblings of poetry, and all the romance of imaginative beauty; though he wandered, nothing loth, in the bright regions of fancy and book-land, enjoying their delight-

ful interchange of sunshine and shade, their wood-walks wild, and fairy bowers, yet he forgot not that future world, which lay in bright perspective, — that Paradise of a Christian's hope, compared to which, the most radiant scenes that unfold to mortal or mental eye are dim, and cold, and dreary.

Such was Gerard! It was not wonderful that Mr. Mortimer felt rich in his son, — that his arrival at the Rectory brightened every scene, and heightened every enjoyment. It was not the mere instinct of paternal fondnes which was called into exercise, but the deeper love that springs from approving judgment and gratified taste.

There was but one point on which Gerard did not satisfy his father, — he overrated the strength of his constitution, and tasked his physical powers without mercy. — At college, he had studied with absorbing intenseness, allowing himself little rest, and less recreation. He was aware that the liberal and finished education he had received, accorded rather with the affectionate feelings of Mr. Mortimer than with his moderate resources. Gerard knew that he silently and cheerfully sacrificed many personal

indulgences for his sake, and he was most anxious to realise the fondest hopes of his father: — the gratitude of a warm and generous heart was a successful stimulus, and his name stood enrolled among the brightest ornaments of his college.

He was also anxious, as soon as possible, to enter upon a career of usefulness, and availed himself of the first offer of clerical employment, by accepting a curacy in a populous parish. — He entered upon it with the ardour, zeal, and devotedness, which characterised all his pursuits, quickened by a deep sense of responsibility; and during two years, the period for which he held the curacy, devoted himself to its duties with a zeal quite disproportioned to his strength. — The day was occupied in laborious duty; and his love of science and literature often tempted him to stir the fire, trim the lamp, and turn again to the witching page, till the night was far spent.

Some new arrangements at length obliged Gerard to resign his charge. — Mr. Mortimer claimed his society for a few months before any new engagement was formed, and insisted upon an interval of repose; for the effects of this

continued over-exertion were but too evident to the eye of affection. There was nothing of the robustness and vigour of health in his appearance; but his natural spirits and mental elasticity were unimpaired, and it was difficult to persuade him that ease and relaxation could be necessary.

"I shall lock up your study, and put the key in my pocket, for at least a month to come, my dear fellow," said Mr. Mortimer, after an anxious scrutiny of his face and figure: — "we will send metaphysics and mathematics to Coventry, and try your skill in planting cabbages and hoeing turnips: — it has been the solace of kings before now, so you will not disdain the occupation."

"But these kings had grown tired of kingly cares," returned Gerard. — "Their mistress, Ambition, had dropped her mask, and showed a face that frightened them; now mine is looking as lovely as ever, and beckons me forward with the most winning grace."

"Whatever her graces may be, you must make your bow to her for the present," observed Mr. Mortimer: — "your looks quite exemplify the wise man's saying, that 'much

study is a weariness of the flesh:'— do pray let your mind lie fallow for a season."

"It will be overrun with weeds," said Gerard: — "they are the only produce indigenous to the soil."

"No, no," said Mr. Mortimer: — "every farmer's boy knows that it is good policy to let the land lie fallow now and then: — the harvest will be all the richer in the end."

"But I really am well, — quite well," said Gerard: — "I defy the whole College of Physicians to detect any symptoms of malady."

"Well, I hope it may be so," returned Mr. Mortimer; — "but I must say of you as Cæsar did of Cassius, — 'Would he were fatter!'"

"Give me time, my dear sir," said Gerard, playfully: — "it is hardly fair to expect me to be portly and rubicund at five-and-twenty; but you will find me a very valiant trencher-man, — a great eater of beef, though it does harm the wit."

"Well, we will try what can be done in the next twelve months," resumed Mr. Mortimer; — "you must be content to be my curate for that time: — I shall not listen to a word of

remonstrance, — health and happiness are treasures not to be sported with."

"I bow to your decision, my dear sir," replied Gerard: — "and fear that I shall settle the matter with my conscience but too easily."

"I prescribe, in the first place," said Mr. Mortimer, "a great deal of air, — and in the second place, a great deal of idleness: — to-day, for instance, you are to do nothing but admire, — first, my new shrubs and flowers, and next my new neighbours at the Priory; new at least they are to you; though I, for some months past, have enjoyed the freedom and privilege of an old friend. — They are the sort of people with whom the heart becomes intimate directly, — so, after falling in love with my dahlias and roses, you may, if you please, fall in love with Constance and her mother."

"A pleasant privilege!" exclaimed Gerard; — "but may there not be rivals in the case, at least as far as the fair daughter is concerned?"

"I know of no open pretenders," said Mr. Mortimer: — "our friend Sir Henry, indeed, sometimes casts an admiring look at the fair maid; but as there is no reason why he should not whisper a tale of love if he had one to tell,

I suppose his heart is unscathed. — As to the lady's, I believe it to be as free and light as air: — she is such a transparent creature, that love would speak directly in her eyes, looks, and voice, if he had crept into her heart."

Mr. Mortimer, good easy man, was not very deeply skilled in the various disguises of love: — he knew him in his own legitimate form with his lip of smiles, light wings, and with all his artillery of

> "Quips and cranks, and wanton wiles,
> Nods and becks, and wreathed smiles."

He knew, too, that he now and then used a golden arrow, and a bow of sugar-cane; but of his tricks and stratagems, — of his Proteus character, he was deplorably ignorant: — that he could steal into the heart in the disguise of indifference, nay, even of distaste, — lie there *perdu* for a time, and then start up in his full strength, triumphing in his successful manœuvres, — was what Mr. Mortimer could not for a moment suspect.

CHAP. XXIV.

" Oh ! Luve will venture in, where it daurna weel be seen ;
Oh ! Luve will venture in, where wisdom ance has been."
BURNS.

SIR HENRY and Constance had met, with a pre-determination not to fall in love ; — the heart of Sir Henry being shielded by the prophecies which Caroline and Percy had imprudently hazarded, and that of Constance, by the station and fortune of Sir Henry.

Far from being dazzled by adventitious distinctions, Constance was disposed to shut her eyes to their real value. — In the progress of her education, she had been inoculated with various prejudices on the subject. — Not only did aunt Ellen condemn that sordid bargaining, that mercantile *per* and *contra*, which is every day practised in the matrimonial market, but she looked with a suspicious eye on all marriages that included aggrandisement : — the love she patronised must be like Virgil's, a na-

tive of the rocks; — if he came in "silken sheen," bowling along in a coach and six, with a rent-roll in his pocket, the unhappy fair one, thus wooed and won, was a suspected character for ever with aunt Ellen. — Honest poverty is to be preferred a million of times, she would say, — and Constance echoed the sentiment with all the enthusiasm of youth; which generally places poverty in a cottage, clustered over with roses and honeysuckles, and sends her forth to glean the golden spoils of harvest with bewitching grace, and enchant some wandering Palemon. — Alas! poverty with her meagre, haggard look, her eyes dim with watching and weeping, and a mind harassed by petty cares, presents a far different aspect.

Constance certainly was not qualified by situation to take a just view of the subject; — though not rich, she was too well provided for, to have much chance of becoming acquainted even with picturesque poverty, and there was every probability that her days would be passed amidst all the common-place comforts and respectability that wait upon competence.

Time, and the contagious influence of Mrs. Grenville's good sense, were at work in mould-

ing and modelling many of her opinions, but she still continued to throw the charming hue of romance over what she termed a thoroughly disinterested match; and to listen with a sentiment not very distinct from contempt to the panegyrics echoed in society, upon highly eligible establishments, and very capital connections.

During the first three months of her acquaintance with Sir Henry she had persuaded herself to dislike him: — her imagination had invested him with certain disagreeable qualities, and she described him, in the words of Shakspeare, to be —

"The best persuaded of himself, so crammed, as he thinks, with excellences, that it is his ground of faith, that all that look on him love him."

She had first framed a chimerical hypothesis, and then drawn inferences with perverse ingenuity. — Constance, however, had too much rectitude of principle, and too honest and decided a love of justice, to be long spell-bound under the influence of her own delusions. — She began to acknowledge that, if Sir Henry's lofty bearing and natural reserve interfered

with the graciousness of his manner, they were blended with redeeming qualities that claimed respect, and almost won affection. — As a son, he might have been a copy to these younger times. — Lady Lennox's indifference to society, or rather her love of seclusion, interfered with many of Sir Henry's social enjoyments: — when a fête was projected, or an influx of visitors poured in, a cloud gathered on the brow of Lady Lennox: — her cough and hectic symptoms were extremely apt suddenly to increase; and she took refuge in her dressing-room, till the tide of friends and gaiety had subsided. — Sir Henry cheerfully accommodated himself to this peculiarity; and there was a delicacy, a consideration, a sacrifice of his own taste and wishes to those of his mother, which no selfish or self-occupied person could have practised. — In the management of his estate, and in the use of his influence, his generosity and uprightness made a strong appeal to the liberal and upright spirit of Constance: — no consideration of rank, of fortune, or interest, interfered with his exertions: — he feared no man's frown, courted no man's smile; but clad in the armour of independence, bravely defied

all consequences. — To the poor his bounty flowed in a quiet, noiseless stream, diffusing comfort and fertility: — his example was unimpeachable; and Constance, in process of time, found herself reconsidering the rash sentence she had pronounced, and reversing it, by substituting other words from the same treasury.

"He is complete in feature and in mind, with all good grace to grace a gentleman."

Sir Henry, too, was beginning to study the opinions, tastes, and character of Constance with considerable interest: — he had been piqued by her undisguised indifference; and it rather fixed than detached his attention; for Sir Henry, with all the superiority of his character, was not free from the sensitiveness of pride. — Of her disinterestedness, he could have no doubt: it beamed in every look, and breathed in every casual sentiment. — Whether he might ever conquer the civil repugnance he appeared to have inspired was doubtful; but it was quite certain, that his fair estate would not help him. — Could he have peeped into the heart of the lady, and read her thoughts, he would have detected encouraging symptoms, — a softness of feeling towards himself; — a certain deference

for his opinion, and confidence in his character, were daily increasing; and perhaps Constance was scarcely conscious how much and how often he occupied her thoughts.

Things were in this position, when Gerard Mortimer arrived at Elton. — The high consideration in which his father was held at the Priory ensured for Gerard a warm welcome from its inmates. — Sir Henry contemplated his attractive qualities with a feeling very much akin to jealousy, and with the alarming conviction, that his tastes, habits, and opinions, were in unison with those of Constance. — He determined to watch the progress of this intimacy with silent vigilance, and to school his heart accordingly: — for to enter the lists with a rival, to risk the possibility of being an unsuccessful competitor for the lady's smiles, was not to be thought of for a moment.

This determination, however, to see and judge for himself, led him frequently to the Priory, and the neighbourhood began to whisper their suspicions, and to couple the names of Sir Henry and Constance together. — Probabilities and possibilities were discussed by the little synod that clustered round Mrs. Bentley's tea-

table, or feasted on Mrs. Murray's incomparable syllabubs: — the report was considered credible, or incredible, according to the degree of favour in which Constance happened to stand with each individual.

Mrs. Somers was all implicit belief, and cordial approbation: — there was no one objection that she could discover; — each party would draw a prize in the great lottery, and it would be a charming match!

Mrs. Murray was all doubt and incredulity. Sir Henry had a right to look higher: — she did not believe he had a thought of Miss Grenville: — as to the frequency of his visits, nothing could be augured from that; — the families had always been intimate, — Lady Lennox and Mrs. Grenville quite like sisters.

Mrs. Bentley would not commit herself: — it might, or might not be — there was no telling: she made it a point to say nothing.

As to the Misses Twyford, they had so great regard for their dear friend Miss Grenville, that they heartily wished it might be the case: — it would give them the greatest possible pleasure: — but Sir Henry was known to be fastidious; and though Miss Twyford thought

Constance a charming girl, and very *nice looking*, she was no beauty: — her cheeks were often too pale; and her nose not perfect: — it would never be like that of Madame de Genlis, — which, according to her own record, was "un nez tres celebré en vers et en prose." Fanny Twyford thought her figure striking, but rather too tall: — it destroyed all fascination. — Jessy did not quarrel with her face and figure, — they were quite to her taste: — but then Constance had one great deficiency, — she had no heart, — no soul; — she was like an icicle — clear, cold, and transparent; — there was no glow, no susceptibility: — she doubted very much whether Constance was capable of love; and from the little she had seen of Sir Henry, she thought him not at all the man to be satisfied without a heart!

Mrs. Somers espoused the cause of Constance with affectionate volubility: — she defended her nose and her complexion, her height and her breadth, her taste and her feelings.

"I never look at her," said she, "without being reminded of Fanny Pitcairn, the belle of Warwickshire thirty years ago: — a beautiful creature she was! with just such a turn of the

head, and just such eyes, as Constance Grenville; — a sad coquette to be sure: — there was no resemblance in that respect: — the men clustered round her, and she smiled upon all in their turn, and made sad havoc. — Colonel Hanson and Mr. Peele, they had a tilting match for her, and after all she would have nothing to do with victor or vanquished. — Mr. Peele, poor man! was lame to the end of his days; and I suppose he had enough of Cupid, for he lived and died an old bachelor: — and Colonel Hanson married, many years after, a little dark, dowdy personage, a complete contrast to Fanny Pitcairn: — however, she had substantial recommendations; fifty thousand pounds down, I did hear — and the Colonel was ruined; had sold every thing he could sell, and mortgaged the rest. Neither duels nor time, however, seemed to sober Fanny: — she went on smiling the men into her chains, and playing a thousand fantastic tricks. — I used to say, 'Oh! Fanny, Fanny, you will go round the wood, and round the wood, and take a crooked stick at last,' and so it proved: — for after a vast many ons and offs, and pros and cons, she married Sir Frederick Lawson, and he was as

jealous as a Turk, and watched her like a dragon. — I saw nothing of her after her marriage, for he carried her off to an estate he had in the north; — but, poor thing! there was an end of her flirtations: — he turned out quite a Bluebeard, and such an obsequious lover as he was! To be sure some men are horridly deceitful, — make love quite *en masque:* — however, there is no fear of such a metamorphosis with Sir Henry, for he is really delightful! they will be a most charming pair!"

"Bless me, Mrs. Somers, how you do jump to a conclusion," exclaimed Mrs. Murray, indignantly: — "very likely they will be no pair at all."

"Very likely," echoed Miss Twyford: "we must not be premature."

"Time will show," said Mrs. Bentley, composedly.

"Yes, yes, we shall see," said Mrs. Somers with a sagacious nod, and the prophetic air of a sibyl: — "as our good friend says, — 'Time will show.'"

CHAP. XXV.

"I am no anatomist, and cannot decide where doctors disagree.

"I have been weighing these points *pro* and *con*, and remain *in statu quo*." HEADLONG HALL.

MISS TWYFORD added to the interminable list of her acquirements and accomplishments some knowledge of phrenology, — or rather an acquaintanceship with the outlines of Dr. Spurzheim's system, which she mistook for a knowledge of it. — Her portfolio exhibited various grim-looking heads, with certain sketchings and mappings, to which she referred with a look of profound wisdom, and her eyes were frequently directed with intense curiosity to the heads of those with whom she came in contact.

In a morning call at the Priory, she accidentally met Mr. Herbert and Percy. Now Mr. Herbert's head, from its tendency to baldness, was peculiarly fascinating to Miss Twyford: — her eyes were rivetted upon it for a minute or two, — then withdrawn, then again fixed; —

till Mr. Herbert, becoming somewhat restless under the continued observation, suddenly interrupted these speculations by advancing towards the lady with a bow, and an assurance that if she had any wish to indulge herself with a closer examination, his head was at her service.

Miss Twyford blushed, apologised, and pleaded the extreme interest she felt on the subject of phrenology, and her entire conviction of the truth of the theory in all its details.

"It is amusing and ingenious," observed Mrs. Grenville; "but I have not yet come to so decided a conclusion."

"Why as to the ingenuity of a theory, that goes for nothing with me," said Mr. Herbert. "There is no hypothesis, however absurd, that may not be invested with probability by a clever, plausible theorist. — Recollect the various absurdities that have been believed, — the ridiculous opinions that have been adopted, not merely by individuals, but by nations, — and you will perceive, that there is an inexhaustible fund of credulity in the human mind, upon which you may venture to draw without fear of failure."

"I confess, I have no patience whatever with the system," said cousin Frances, who felt

always rather affronted when the subject was started : — " it is a tissue of absurdity from beginning to end, and I wonder any person of common sense can be found to defend it. — Surely, in the course of six thousand years, we should have heard of these organs and bumps, if they had really existed : — the whole system is the mere vagary of a speculative brain."

" Why, I do not know," replied Mrs. Grenville ; — " certainly very extraordinary coincidences have been discovered ; — for instance, as it respects the ancient statues, these coincidences are very striking : — now the extreme correctness of the Grecian sculptors is generally admitted."

" Yes, yes, once set up a theory," said Mr. Herbert, " and I will answer for it, both the ancient and modern world will be ransacked for props to support it."

" A case in point from the modern world is at your service sir," observed Percy. A friend of mine paid a visit to Captain Parry on board his vessel, and was struck with the extraordinary developement of the organ of locality in most persons on board : — in some

instances it was so apparent as to amount almost to deformity; and the authority in this case is perfectly unexceptionable, for my friend is not only a phrenologist but also an excellent anatomist: — now what do you say to this?"

"What do I say? why that a man who looks at any object through the medium of a predilection sees it through a mist of magnifying power. — A person may think proper to put on a pair of green spectacles, which throw a false hue on surrounding objects; but am I to believe that roses and violets are green because they appear so to him? And if I were not afraid of plunging you into the deep abyss of metaphysics, I would ask, why operations purely mental should require any material organs at all? — I can perceive the use of the eye and ear, and their beautiful adaptation to their specific purposes: — but I fancy it would be difficult to discover the use or the beauty of those organs which phrenologists think proper to assume."

"Ah, sir! neither your scepticism nor your philosophy will avail, against the strong evidence of facts; — but you have not studied the

subject, — you have not made yourself acquainted with the theory."

" Well, you who have studied the subject will have the goodness, perhaps, to tell me to what peculiar organ I may refer my friend Mrs. Hilton's love of cats and dogs," enquired Mr. Herbert.

" A whimsical modification, of benevolence I suppose, sir," said Percy, smiling, " with an absence or deficiency of those faculties which would give it a higher and more beneficial direction."

" Pardon my ignorance," replied Mr. Herbert: — " as some of the loves have an organ to themselves, I thought that each might require such an appendage; — for instance, Mr. Mortimer's love of gardening, — my love of riding, — Mrs. Somers's love of talking."

" No, no sir, — we need no such superfluous provision," said Percy: — " allow us the primitive faculties and organs we claim, and they will be found quite sufficient to account for all the varieties of feeling, opinion, and character, that may be met with."

" Indeed! — then it is not because the dimensions of the skull rather straitened the phreno-

logists for room, that they limited the number of organs to thirty-six, — but because every possible propensity and preference may be included in that mystical number."

"Combination will do wonders both in the moral and physical world," returned Percy: "we have but seven primitive colours, you know, and yet do they not produce an endless variety of hues?"

"Size is your test of developement, is it not?" asked Mr. Herbert.

Percy nodded assent.

"Doubtless, madam, you have by this time discovered my bump of wit, and organ of mirth," pursued Mr. Herbert, bowing to Miss Twyford. — "Now suppose," continued he, "before the dawn of this new light, these bumps, by cultivation and exercise, had expanded in a very remarkable degree, and that some unphrenological surgeon, mistaking them for redundancies, had deprived me of these treasures, — a charming predicament I should have been in! Sad and witless must I have remained for the rest of my days."

"Ah! you are supposing an impossible case, my dear sir," said Percy, laughing; — "you are

proving that you are neither an anatomist nor a phrenologist; — but if facts and coincidences could bring conviction, we could overwhelm you with them. It is said that two of our most celebrated living authors have the organ of comparison strikingly developed; and it is notorious that their works are so peculiarly rich in illustrations, that there have been found critics splenetic enough to quarrel with them on that score."

"My dear fellow," replied Mr. Herbert, "I have lived long enough in this world to estimate the phrases, '*it is said*,' and '*it is reported*,' precisely at their right value."

"But," observed Miss Twyford, "Madame de Genlis, in her Memoirs, mentions the remarkable developement of the organs indicating perseverance and musical talent in her own case; — will you not admit her testimony, sir?"

"Why, as Madame de Genlis has acted no inconspicuous part on the theatre of the world during the last seventy years," replied Mr. Herbert, "her acquirements and characteristics, in all probability, would be tolerably well known to any one admitted to the honour of examining her head."

"But surely, my dear uncle, you are not infidel enough to resist sufficient and credible testimony. What do you say to the case of a boy, absolutely an idiot in every other respect, who calculates with a facility and nicety the most astonishing? — and the organ, expressive of this faculty, is developed to a surprising degree: — I will not, however, waste any eloquence upon you: — if a man is resolved to close his eyes, what will the brightness of the sun avail him?"

"But you must beware of taxing those with wilful blindness whose views are limited only by the lowness of their position," said Mr. Herbert. "I have confessed my ignorance upon this subject; perhaps when I have climbed to the philosophical height which you appear to have reached, the truth and beauty of this system may burst upon my astonished and delighted eye."

"Most likely, sir, you will always find something better to do than to trouble yourself with such whimsical nonsense, — such ridiculous jargon," — said Frances. "I am sure it is quite provoking to see all the young mothers feeling their children's heads, and talking of the developement of this organ, and the deficiency

of that. People were absurd enough about the genius of their children, before all this folly came into fashion."

"I do not see that it can lead to any serious mistakes," observed Mrs. Grenville; "and if there be any truth in the system, it may certainly be rendered useful in education."

"Oh! I think that education ought to be conducted entirely with reference to phrenology; and that it will be successful only when it is so conducted," said Miss Twyford.

"Yes, yes, — by all means," — replied Mr. Herbert, laughing, "let the advice of that distinguished philosopher, Mr. Cranium, be adopted throughout the civilised world; — but," added he, after a short pause, "suppose I bring forward instances in which no such coincidences as those to which you have so triumphantly referred can be found — what becomes of your theory?"

"I defy you, sir," returned Percy: "neither your prejudices nor your sagacity will enable you to make such a discovery."

"Psha!" said Mr. Herbert, — "I would engage to bring forward a dozen living refutations in twenty-four hours."

"Retain your scepticism if you please, and allow us still to enjoy our own convictions," replied Percy. — "I hope your opinion is unshaken," continued he, addressing Miss Twyford.

"Entirely so, sir: — the evidence of facts is quite conclusive with me," said she, rising to take leave.

"And I am still inclined to wait the test of time," observed Mrs. Grenville: "the science is at present in its infancy."

"Bless me, Mrs. Grenville, I wonder a person of your good sense, can sanction such folly," said cousin Frances, as soon as they were by themselves. — "It is all very well for a silly, shallow, conceited girl like Miss Twyford, or for a wild, rhodomontading young man such as Percy Lennox, but really, at your time of life, you ought to know better."

Mrs. Grenville only smiled good-humouredly; and Frances left the room.

CHAP. XXVI.

"Downright decision, by the young and inexperienced, on things which only experience can teach, is the credential of vain impertinence."

"Humility and love constitute the essence of true religion."

LAVATER.

MR. MORTIMER was extremely anxious to check the growth of party spirit in his parish: — he had too often seen kindliness of feeling, nay, the very essence of Christianity itself, melt away under its influence, not to deprecate its effects: but it required all the sobriety of his judgment, and all the reality of his piety, to effect this object: for even in the little community of Elton it was no easy task; — even there might be found specimens of many classes — indifference mistaking itself for moderation — worldly-mindedness for sociality — spiritual pride for religious earnestness. Some were afflicted with rather a superfluous dread of being righteous overmuch — others were so intent upon christianising the

world around them that they forgot the necessity of christianising their own hearts. — Mr. Mortimer's natural intelligence and good sense, were quickened by the strong sympathy he felt for his flock as a pastor; — absurdities which might have amused him as a philosopher, affected him as a Christian; — he saw quickly and clearly into character, and applied the rein or the spur according to the necessity of the case; and his remonstrances, though frank and energetic, rarely offended, for they were offered in the very spirit of Christian love.

A young lady had lately become a resident in his parish, who called his pastoral vigilance into exercise. — She was distantly related to Mrs. Bentley; and being an orphan, with a comfortable independence, came to reside under her roof as a boarder. — Miss Musgrave was in some degree influenced in her choice of a residence by a benevolent recollection of Mrs. Bentley's limited income, and a kind desire of adding to the comforts of her declining life. — Such an event in that lady's history was not likely to be passed over as a common-place occurrence: — it excited a considerable sensation in the village; and those whom experience

had familiarised with Mrs. Bentley's misty mind and dusky parlour were fully competent to appreciate the benevolence of Miss Musgrave. She was not, however, solely influenced in her choice of a home by personal kindness for Mrs. Bentley. She considered the village of Elton a field for usefulness; for Miss Musgrave was one of those officious young persons who make it a point of conscience to instruct every body they meet, upon religious matters: — she assumed a sort of religious dictatorship, — a right to enquire into, direct, and regulate the spiritual concerns of all her acquaintances. It might have been supposed, that the Scriptures were a closed casket, of which she only had found the key; for the most domineering monk in Christendom could not have been more decisive and dictatorial. — Her lessons were addressed not merely to the young, *that* could have been borne; but to mammas and papas, to the old and grey-headed; and as her notions were crude, and her opinions evidently formed without much reflection, it was somewhat preposterous to see her mistaking her own dark lantern for a sunbeam which was to enlighten the world. — Naturally restless, she was by no

means free from that love of novelty and excitement which is to be found in the circles of the gay and frivolous: — it took a different turn, and had a far higher object, but the appetite for variety was much the same. — Now these mistakes were the more to be lamented, because Miss Musgrave had the cause of religion really at heart: her time, talents, and energies, were devoted to the "one thing needful;" and her example would have been beautiful and beneficial, had not the dictatorial dogmatism of her manner counteracted its heathful influence.

"Have you been introduced to Mr. Mortimer?" enquired Mrs. Grenville, when Miss Musgrave returned her call.

"No, I was from home when he favoured me with a visit," replied Miss Musgrave: "pray is he a man of any piety?"

"Mr. Mortimer is exemplary in every respect," observed Mrs. Grenville: "we should be most ungrateful not to value him."

"Indeed! I never heard him spoken of as a decidedly pious character," said Miss Musgrave; but if he be so, you have reason for gratitude. — I am sure the parish of Wood-

lands, where I have been visiting, is in a lamentable state of darkness."

"What, under Dr. Burke's care, with the Bible, and our excellent liturgy!" exclaimed Mrs. Grenville, in a tone of surprise.

"Dr. Burke is a man of talent," resumed Miss Musgrave, "but as ignorant of Gospel truth as a child."

Mrs. Grenville, who had been accustomed to think with admiration of Dr. Burke's talents, and with reverence of his piety, listened with unfeigned astonishment; but as she was about to express this feeling, the door opened, and Mr. Mortimer was announced. — After a little general conversation, Miss Musgrave instituted an enquiry into the state of the parish.

"Are your schools flourishing, sir?" said she, addressing Mr. Mortimer: — "so much of these things depends upon management: — I put those at Hartwell upon a much better plan during my residence there; and I shall be happy to lend my assistance here."

Mr. Mortimer bowed.

"My excellent friend Mr. Mellish was most indefatigable with respect to schools," continued she.

"And who is Mr. Mellish?" enquired Mr. Mortimer.

"A most valuable young man," indeed, replied Miss Musgrave: "the only pious clergyman in Westbury."

Mrs. Grenville was absolutely startled, — all the clergy of that large town, deans, canons, vicars, rectors, and curates, condemned without mercy, in one sweeping phrase.

"The rest are mere worldly men," pursued Miss Musgrave, in the most decided tone imaginable.

"You have strong grounds, of course, for an accusation of so grave a nature," said Mr. Mortimer, "for a term of more absolute condemnation could scarcely be found: — some neglect of duty has probably come under your own observation."

"Why, not exactly," returned Miss Musgrave: — "there is no want of outward decency and decorum, but they are merely respectable men."

"A clergyman respectable without piety, is somewhat of a paradox to me," observed Mr. Mortimer.

"The distinction may not be obvious to every one," replied Miss Musgrave, "but to me it is perfectly intelligible; indeed the mind must be spiritually enlightened before these things are seen in their true colours, and in all their bearings."

Mr. Mortimer, wishing to give a different tone to the conversation, took up a volume of Dr. —— Lectures, and enquired whether Miss Musgrave was acquainted with them.

"No," returned she, "I do not read largely, — indeed I find books but blind guides: — we must profit by very different teaching; and I should not expect to find much that was satisfactory in this work," continued she, turning over the leaves with a supercilious air; "though I believe the Bishop of —— to be a learned man, and a very worthy, well-intentioned person, acting up to the light he has: but I fear he is very ignorant of real religion. — The veil, poor man, is not yet removed from his heart."

And this was said of a champion in the cause of Christianity, whose works will live for ever; — whose life is in complete harmony with his principles, and by a young woman of the *ripe* age of twenty-two. — As Constance listened to

the oracular tone in which all this was said, and contrasted it with the youthful face and figure of the speaker, it appeared to her so ridiculous, that she could scarcely repress a laugh.

"My dear young lady," said Mr. Mortimer, addressing Miss Musgrave, "you will perhaps imagine, that I am premature in claiming, at this early stage of our acquaintance, the privilege of a pastor; but do you weigh well the full force of your own decided and exclusive phraseology? These sweeping censures, and rash conclusions, would be incompatible with true Christian humility at any age; — at yours, — pardon my sincerity, — they are preposterous."

Miss Musgrave coloured a little, but replied, that whatever offence it might give, the truth ought never to be suppressed.

"I reverence the principle," observed Mr. Mortimer; "but in setting up a standard of our own, by which the piety of the whole Christian world is to be measured, by indulging in personal reflections and reprehensions, by deducing the most uncharitable inferences from slight premises, do we forward the cause of truth? besides, you know, it has been said, that truth

is the offspring of unbroken meditation, and of thoughts often revised and corrected. — Do you think you have had quite time enough to revise and correct yours? — I assure you, though I am old and grey-headed, it is a work with which I am still busy." — Miss Musgrave appeared slightly embarrassed, and after expressing her regret that their *views* appeared to differ so materially, soon rose to take leave.

"Well, I hope," said Constance, as the door closed, "that I shall never adopt any views that foster presumption and extinguish charity. What a disagreeable person she is!"

"Hush! hush! my dear Constance," exclaimed Mr. Mortimer: "I will not allow you to draw uncharitable inferences, or to form hasty opinions, any more than Miss Musgrave."

"It must be confessed," said Constance, who had not forgiven Miss Musgrave for presuming to question Mr. Mortimer's piety, "that the lady is a very unfortunate specimen of one of the saints."

"Constance," resumed Mr. Mortimer, in a tone of grave displeasure, "is it possible that you can use thus lightly and reproachfully a term consecrated by our holiest associations

and feelings? — Surely those who profess to dislike cant, would do well to avoid all cant terms themselves."

"Forgive me, my dear sir," said Constance, with tears in her eyes: — "I was out of humour with Miss Musgrave, and ——"

"Yes, when young persons see the mistakes of one party in a strong light," observed Mr. Mortimer, "there is always great danger of their being betrayed into the opposite extreme. Miss Musgrave and I shall be excellent friends by-and-by. — I do not intend to set myself in hostile array against her: — though her tone is too decided, her piety may be genuine and earnest; and for one instance of intemperate zeal, we may find, alas! twenty of an indifference which is far more perilous."

Mr. Mortimer then shook hands kindly with Constance, and returned to the rectory.

CHAP. XXVII.

"Then gently scan your brother man,
Still gentler sister woman;
Though they may gang a kennin wrang,
To step aside is human:
One point must still be greatly dark,
The moving *why* they do it;
And just as lamely can ye mark,
How far perhaps they rue it.

Who made the heart, 'tis He alone
Decidedly can try us;
He knows each chord, its various tone,
Each spring, its various bias:
Then at the balance let's be mute,
We never can adjust it;
What's *done* we partly may compute,
But know not what's *resisted*."

BURNS.

MISS MUSGRAVE entered on her projected career of usefulness without loss of time: she lectured the old, and tutored the young; scolded the idle; nor did she forget to clothe the naked, and feed the hungry; — all this she performed with a disregard of forms and hours, wholly at variance with Mrs. Bentley's clockwork habits, and which kept that lady's mind

in a perpetual conflict of vexation and astonishment.

Miss Musgrave seldom appeared at the breakfast-table, till the tea was weak and cold: — at dinner, a plate might be set by for her, or if she dined at the fixed, legitimate dinner-hour, she would, to Mrs. Bentley's unspeakable discomfort, disappear with the cloth, and recommence her erratic proceedings.

Mr. Mortimer watched her with a quiet, observant eye: — he discovered, that, with the best intentions, her theological instructions were somewhat muddy and mystical; his object, however, was not to quench, but to regulate the young lady's zeal, — to prove that the pastoral staff was far too sacred a deposit to be trusted to inexperienced and unprepared hands: and one morning, on returning from some of her visits, she found the following letter on her dressing-table: —

"My dear Miss Musgrave,

"It is now two months since I had the pleasure of an introduction to you, and during that time I have been a silent, but not an uninterested observer of your opinions, pursuits, and

habits. — It is with much satisfaction that I have witnessed your active desire of doing good; and I have still more satisfaction in expressing my conviction, that this activity springs, in a great degree, from true Christian principle;—that your love of religion is sincere and genuine, and that you are unfeignedly anxious to promote the best interests of your fellow-creatures.

"I make no apology for these observations: — called to watch for souls, as one who must give an account at that awful tribunal where the pastor and his flock will one day stand, every individual of that flock becomes to me an object of deep and solemn interest. — I have said that you are anxious to promote the best interests of your fellow-creatures; — but it is possible that the means you employ for effecting this object may be inadequate, or unsuitable: — unsoundness of opinion, or immaturity of judgment, may disqualify you for that spiritual superintendence which you seem desirous of sharing with me. I candidly acknowledge that I do not feel sufficient confidence in your discretion and judgment to allow of such a participation; — nor, indeed, were you thoroughly qualified, should I deem it right to sanction a practice likely to

lead to mischievous innovations. — Young persons, with opinions decidedly erroneous, may be animated by a zeal like your own, and conceive it to be their duty to multiply proselytes in the neighbourhood in which they reside.

" Now, while I do ample justice to the purity and singleness of your intentions, I must be allowed to say, that, as the shepherd of this part of Christ's fold, I am not a little interested in the spiritual food administered to my flock; and, therefore, I make it my particular request, that any religious books which you are kind enough to supply, may first be placed in my hands; — and that in conversing with your poor neighbours on religious subjects you will confine yourself to those simple doctrines and truths which are the pillars of our holy faith. — I appeal, in this request, to your courtesy as a gentlewoman, and to the deference which I feel to be my due, as the appointed spiritual guide of this parish. — As an auxiliary, — as a young person acting under my auspices and influence, — I shall be happy to claim your assistance, whenever that assistance may be beneficial.

" I entreat you not for one moment to imagine, that, by thus attempting to direct and control

your exertions, I have any wish to check your sympathy for the temporal and spiritual wants of those around you, or to cramp the energy of your benevolence; — no, let the full tide of kindling feeling flow on, — let the bright morning of your days be dedicated to God; — far be from me the wish of abridging your usefulness: on the contrary, it is my earnest desire, that by intelligent and well-directed activity, you may become an example to your companions in age and station. — You have chosen, incomparably, the better part; — but let not your good be evil spoken of: — you cannot be too devoted, — you cannot be too useful, — but we may all be too busy. — The cultivation of personal religion, and of those habits of thought, reflection, and watchfulness, upon which its growth so much depends, may be impeded by that restlessness and love of excitement which, not unfrequently, take the form of religious zeal. — Bear with me, while I caution you on this subject, and while I point out what I consider to be some mistakes in your tone and manner in general society.

" It is one of the tests of our sincerity as Christians, that we are really anxious to dis-

cover and correct the defects of our own character; — and as I give you full credit for this sincerity, I am disposed to think that you will listen without resentment to the language of expostulation. — In my character of pastor, therefore, I venture to say, that I consider you as deficient in practical humility and charity: — you set up certain tests, by which you decide upon the Christian feeling and religious zeal of all your acquaintance; and the shibboleth of party has but too much influence in the decision. — To support certain societies and institutions is, with you, the test of Christian and clerical character, — the touchstone by which their piety is to be tried, — the thermometer by which the temperature of their zeal is to be determined. — Now, why should you deny to others the privilege which you yourself claim, of directing your exertions in the channel which you consider most useful? — To stigmatise them as lukewarm, because they avail themselves of the same privilege of choice, is at once uncandid and presumptuous. — If, indeed, you discover coldness and indifference upon those most interesting subjects, the extension of Christianity and the diffusion of religious knowledge, — if

the contemplation of that day, when there shall be one fold and one Shepherd, awaken no glow of feeling, excite no lively interest, and animate to no exertion, there is reason to fear that the lamp is not carefully trimmed, nor the light brightly burning; that the spirit of faith and love is not shed abroad in the heart.—But even in such a case, the language of harsh invective should never be employed. — As a Christian and a clergyman, I should feel it my duty to remonstrate frankly and fearlessly, but in the spirit of that religion whose essence is love. — In general, the faith, hope, and zeal of a young person, especially of a young woman, is best discovered by a sedulous performance of duty; by the control and regulation of her feelings and temper, — by a nice and conscientious improvement of time, — by a cultivation of all the sympathies and charities that ameliorate and embellish life. — To rebuke and to reprove are not her province: it is rarely her duty to use the language of exhortation, more especially in general conversation: — but if a moment occur in which a word in season may be spoken, in what a spirit of gentleness and humility should that word be uttered! how entirely should the

language of dictation and the tone of dogmatism be avoided! — Take care that you do not sacrifice the appropriate and indispensable graces of youth to a zeal without knowledge, — that you do not, by turning your energy into an unfit channel, retard your own progress in piety; — take care that while you busy yourself about the duties of others, you do not forget your own. — Analyse your own motives carefully, — judge your own conduct strictly, — but avoid all harsh constructions as to the motives of others, and judge with the utmost possible tenderness of their actions. — As far as example can influence, let yours be not only blameless, but winning. — Early piety is beautiful as the first violet of spring; — let it discover itself, like that unobtrusive flower, by diffusive sweetness.

"Do not mistake me; — do not believe, I entreat you, that I am advocating that compromising spirit, which is at once so contemptible and so fatal; — fear neither the frown nor the laugh of the world; — let not the imputation of methodism or singularity for a moment deter you from devoting yourself to those pursuits and objects which you feel to be of unspeakable value: — pursue the narrow way with an un-

wearied step; — act firmly up to your convictions, — but do not erect yourself into the champion of a party. — As long as I have any influence as a pastor, I will use it to prevent my parishioners from raising what they term the standard of evangelism on one side, and that of orthodoxy on the other: — I will not permit them, without remonstrance, to waste the brief days of a brief life in keen disputation and wrangling controversy. — When I reflect upon the points of difference by which these two parties are severed, and upon the love of truth, the piety and zeal by which many individuals of each party, who have come under my own observation, are distinguished, I cannot but contemplate them ' as children who have fallen out by the way, in pursuing the path that leads to their Father's house, but who will yet rejoice together in the light of his presence, and smile at the differences that divided them on their journey.' — Surely we should be far better employed in watching the evil tendencies of our own hearts, in measuring our conduct by the word of God, and the example of Christ, than by settling the comparative merits of certain persons and certain opinions, and indulging an

accusing spirit against those who differ from us in our estimate of these persons and opinions: — surely, to provoke each other to love and good works ought to be the only rivalry among Christians. — Let me entreat you to think of these things: — consider them well, my dear Miss Musgrave, — and the piety which, in your case, is too apt to wear a repulsive aspect, will be seen in all its appropriate loveliness. — May I be permitted to add, that I think a steady course of religious and devotional reading might be extremely advantageous to you: — it would give a more healthful and vigorous tone to your feelings and sentiments. — There is at present something hectic in the complexion of your piety. — From the tenor of your conversation, I fear, that even in reading the Scriptures, your disposition is not sufficiently humble and teachable; — you appear to me to read them rather to strengthen your preconceived opinions, than that your will may be subdued and controlled, and your conduct regulated by their clear and sublime lessons: — you trust chiefly to your own interpretations and comments, disdaining the use of books; and thus, in my opinion, neglect those means of spiritual and intellectual improvement

which, in this land of light and religious knowledge, God himself has bestowed upon you. — You are content with the somewhat muddy waters of your own cistern, when innumerable springs, from which you would derive strength and nourishment, arise around you. — Your reading is in a great degree desultory, and chiefly confined to a few tracts, and some of the popular religious fictions of the day. — Now, many of these fictions, excellent as they are, do not furnish what I consider wholesome food for your peculiar constitution of mind; but, very unintentionally, foster the mistakes into which you are betrayed: — they generally relate the history of some child or young person through whose agency the conversion of the whole family is effected. — Now, human nature is so imitative, that the tone of such characters is more easily caught than the principles by which they are influenced. — Children learn to parrotise on the subject; and young people imagine that the superstructure of their religion is complete, when even the first stone of the building is not firmly laid. — To echo the language of piety, to talk of principles and feelings, is extremely easy: — it is one thing to walk through an armoury, and

descant upon the use of the sword, and shield, and helmet, — and another to buckle them on, and grapple with our foes in the battle-field. — I have another objection to the prevailing strain of these fictions: — the young person who converts all within her sphere generally dies in the full beauty of early bloom, the victim of consumption, and shows forth the value of Christian principles in the most arduous of all conflicts. — This is well: — but would it not be better occasionally to vary the circumstances, and to show forth these principles not only in the conflict of death but in the conflict of life; — to display their purifying, animating, sustaining effect amidst the thousand cares, temptations, and perplexities of active life; to bring them in contact with society, and prove that the fine gold even there will not become dim; to exhibit these principles as beautifying the maternal and conjugal character, and rendering human nature not only pious, but lovely, engaging, and useful?

" In portraying characters as examples, I think it would be more beneficial to display Christianity in its regulating, practical effects; restraining the temper, subduing the passions, and controlling, by its hallowed influence, the

desires, wishes, and hopes of the heart; teaching us, in short, not only to think rightly and suffer meekly, but how to live, as well as how to die.

"I have, perhaps, trespassed on your patience, my dear young lady, by this long letter; but you will do justice to the motive by which I am influenced, and you will believe that I am actuated only by that deep concern for your spiritual welfare, which a full sense of my own responsibility inspires. — It is at once my duty and my privilege to promote these interests by every means in my power: — each individual of my flock has a claim upon my time, a claim upon my sympathy, and an interest in my prayers; and it is the hope and wish nearest to my heart, that they may be my 'crown and my joy,' in that great day when the Lord 'shall make up his jewels.'

"With affectionate and holy earnestness do I commend you to the guidance of that Spirit who can alone impart a right judgment in all things, who can alone establish, strengthen, settle you; and let me entreat, that in your prayers before the throne of grace, you will not forget frequent supplications for

"Your faithful friend and pastor,

"W. MORTIMER."

Miss Musgrave had sufficient good sense, and good breeding, to receive the letter with a good grace. — She could not, indeed, divest herself at once of the habit of dictating and dogmatising — such a reformation must be a work of time; but she acceded to Mr. Mortimer's wish respecting the religious books she distributed; and she submitted, though reluctantly, to follow where she had hitherto loved to lead. — Mr. Mortimer was careful to claim her active services, whenever they were at all compatible with his own plans; and he, in many cases, successfully combatted the prejudices which her manners excited; and by his candid appreciation of what was really valuable in her character softened the repugnance which she not unfrequently inspired.

CHAP. XXVIII.

" They are flown,
Beautiful fictions of our fathers, wove
In Superstition's web, when Time was young,
And fondly loved and cherished; they are flown
Before the wand of Science!"

AUTHOR OF DARTMOOR.

" IT is a lovely evening! — Do you feel inclined to take a stroll?" said Mrs. Grenville to cousin Frances, as the tea-things disappeared.

" By all means," returned she; " there is such a cool, pleasant breeze, that it will be quite delightful!"

A day of visitors and variety had kept her spirits, or rather her temper, in tune: she was all smiles and alacrity, and quickly prepared to join her companions.

" You wish to introduce Frances to your favourite walk," said Mrs. Grenville to her daughter. — " Sunset will be the happiest moment, — will it not?"

"Yes, the round is not above three miles and a half," returned Constance, who was desirous that Frances should be aware of the extent of the walk, yet unwilling to hazard a hint that it might be too far: — it was one, indeed, that would have disturbed the lady's serenity, and quickly chased away every smile. — The figure of Frances, within a few years, had gained considerable amplitude: — for some time she had been resolutely blind, and sturdily incredulous on the subject; but she had lately been assailed by a certain secret consciousness of the fact, which served only to quicken her tenacity: — every hint, that confirmed her own suspicion, was resented as an injury; and she was extremely quick in discerning the most remote allusion to such a possibility. — Constance, who had unwittingly offended once or twice in this way, had now learned prudence: — she avoided all allusions to stout ladies, or stout gentlemen, — never glanced at their capabilities or disqualifications; and had recently skipped over, in their evening readings, the chapter in "Bracebridge Hall," entitled the "Stout Gentleman," as trenching upon dangerous ground. — She satisfied herself, at the present moment, with

specifying the distance of the walk, and left cousin Frances to her own discretion.

They set off with the loitering, luxuriating step, that suits a summer evening; — wandered along a beautiful winding lane — a mere cart-track, bordered with broad green sward, rich in daisies and wild flowers, and studded with rough bushes of hawthorn and young oaks. — It ran through irregular ground, varying perpetually, and presenting a constant succession of hill and dale. — Constance paused at every favourite gate, to admire the beautiful bursts of country which broke upon the eye; sometimes disclosing a rich distance, bathed in sunshine; the spires of different village churches, beaming and brightening in the evening ray; and sometimes a quiet home woodland scene, with here and there a cottage, discovered only by its curling wreath of smoke, ascending till lost in the bright blue sky. — The lane terminated in a wild heath, skirted by noble woods, and broken into deep dells, tufted and burnished with the golden blossoms of the furze, intermingled with the purple foxglove, which grew in the richest profusion: — the evening breeze gently waved its beautiful bells. — A few tall

scattered trees threw their long shadows on the ground, and the sun, slowly setting, shed a tempered splendour over the whole scene.

At the entrance of the heath, pausing, like themselves, to look and admire, they overtook Gerard Mortimer. — He was on his way to visit a sick cottager, and joined the party as they seated themselves on the trunk of an old tree, to enjoy the freshness of the breeze.

" How I pity those who are condemned to the din and duskiness of a great town, on such an evening as this ! " exclaimed Constance, looking round with that intense feeling of gratification which the contemplation of nature sometimes awakens. — " The world of fashion, and the world of business," continued she, — " what dull regions they are, compared to this wild, lonely, beautiful heath ! — I would rather join company with the gipsies, than be obliged to pass my life either in the one or the other." — Her eyes were fixed upon a gipsy girl, seated on the fantastic root of an ash-tree, which grew half way down the steep side of one of the dells; the kettle was suspended a few feet lower, —

" Between two poles, upon a stick transverse."

A little ragged, black-eyed urchin was feeding the embers with dry sticks; while a pony, rough and ragged as his companions, grazed near them.

"What can be more picturesque than that group!" said Mrs. Grenville: — "it harmonises so well with the scene. — A shepherd and his flock would look poor and tame compared to them."

"A shepherd and his flock fill the mind with pastoral images," observed Constance, "and carry it back to patriarchal times; — but there is no mystery to keep the imagination in play, — none of that feeling of interest with which we speculate upon the gipsy tribe."

"Their history is, indeed, mere conjecture," said Gerard. — "How little do we know, with any certainty, of their origin, language, and religion; how little do we know, except of their wandering and predatory habits, and their high pretensions to an acquaintance with the book of fate."

"I suppose their reputation for such skill is fast waning in England," said Constance. — "Every body reads and writes, and grows wise now-a-days; and popular superstitions, I am

afraid, will disappear with popular prejudices.— Even in Scotland the belief in second-sight seems gradually fading away, under the influence of diffused culture and civilisation."

"Well! I really think we need not afflict ourselves about the decline of superstition," said Frances. — "We might as well regret that the sun chases away the mist and haze of the morning."

"Ah! there is a shadowy beauty about that mist and haze," observed Constance, "that is far more interesting than the light of common day: — the poetry of superstition is too delightful to be relinquished without regret; and what are the dull realities of science and philosophy compared to its delicious witcheries?"

"I ought to quarrel with that ungracious epithet, as applied to science and philosophy," said Gerard, with a smile; "but I should be still more inclined to quarrel with science and philosophy themselves, if they interfered with the *poetry* of superstition. — I think, however, that the culture you so much dread will only chase away vulgar credulity: it will not interfere with that imaginative superstition which ge-

nerally clings to minds even of the highest tone, and under the full power of cultivation."

"Ah! but our enjoyment of this imaginative superstition will grow less and less vivid, I fear," returned Constance, "when we no longer hear the goblin tale in the low hushed tone that indicates implicit belief, — when it is told as the mere gossips' story of former years, which we are too wise to believe, and too courageous to tremble at. — We cannot unite incompatible advantages — we cannot be reasoning, logical, scientific persons, and yet abandon ourselves freely to the delightful illusions of imagination."

"You wish, then, to exchange the maturity of your intellect for its infancy," returned Gerard. — "You long to abandon yourself to every illusion as you did, when, with the vivid emotion of childhood, you listened to the tale of Little Red Riding Hood; and trembled, and turned pale, at the thought of the wolf in grand-mamma's nightcap. — But do you think it necessary to be completely under the *despotism* of imagination to enjoy a goblin tale?"

"Alas! there is no hope of our being subject to this most delightful despotism," replied Con-

stance. — "I dare say, very soon, there will be no one left in Ireland who has heard the moan of the banshee, seen the cluricaune at his work, or caught the fairies at their midnight dance. — No, no, those good days are gone by: — we are all grown wise, reasonable, matter-of-fact people, — not even a witch is to be found now-a-days, in any corner of England."

"That is not to be very deeply lamented, I think," said Frances: — "we need not surely regret that the tar barrel and the ring have fallen into disuse."

"I cannot believe that credulity is necessary to our enjoyment of a goblin tale," observed Gerard; — "on the contrary, the credulity that is sufficiently strong to excite absolute physical terror must destroy enjoyment. — Now when we listen to such a tale, the imagination is sufficiently excited to lull the reason, for a moment, to sleep. — We hear it with thrilling interest, but without overwhelming terror!"

"Yes; no degree of refinement, science, and cultivation, can rob us of this enjoyment," observed Mrs. Grenville; "for it is in the very nature of the mind of man to take a deep interest in such subjects: — there exists not a

human being, from the wildest savage to the most lettered and resolute sceptic, who is not more or less interested in them."

"But, my dear mother, you perhaps are scarcely a fair judge on these subjects," returned Constance, laughing: — "for I consider you to be one of those delightful people who have a spice of credulity, — just a charming little tinge of superstition: — perhaps Queen Mab, or Titania, permitted you, in days 'lang syne,' to share their revels; for you certainly have a great affection for fairy land, and the good people; and as to a tale of wraith, or warlock, or bogle, have not I seen you edge your chair closer into the circle, and listen with delighted, believing ear?"

"Do not palm such absurd notions on your mother, pray, Constance," exclaimed Frances: — "she has a great deal too much good sense to entertain them."

"No, no, she has not," returned Constance. "I will defend her from the reputation of such dull wisdom; — no one ever took such genuine delight in a ghost story, who had not a tiny grain of faith in it. — Ah! there is guilt in her face," continued she, looking playfully un-

der her mother's bonnet: — "guilty, guilty! — in spite of that laughing eye, and curling lip. — Ask her, and she will acknowledge her belief, that

> " ' Millions of spiritual creatures
> Walk the earth, both when we wake
> And when we sleep.' "

"Mrs. Grenville has better warrant than tradition or superstition for the belief," observed Gerard: — "we read of ministering spirits in the record of truth; and why should we doubt their agency?" — there is something soothing and elevating in the idea that we are objects of interest to those pure spirits who stand in the presence of God, and do his bidding."

"Do you remember that passage in Klopstock's Messiah, in which the angel Abadonna resigns his charge?" asked Constance. — "What a thrill of interest we feel at that moment, even for Judas!"

"It is all very well for a poetical purpose, perhaps," said cousin Frances; "but if we are unconscious of the influence and agency of these ministering spirits, I can discover no particular advantage to be derived from their sympathy."

"It seems a link between earth and heaven, which I should be sorry to see destroyed; — and the belief in the agency of these spirits is certainly confirmed and sanctioned by the language of Scripture," returned Gerard: — "besides, such reasoning would apply to influence of a still more sacred nature, — as even this cannot be distinguished from the suggestion and action of our own minds."

"Ah! that is a very different thing to believing in a parcel of trumpery ghost stories, and in the pranks of witches and fairies," said Frances.

"Do not speak irreverently upon that subject, in such a spot as this," returned Constance. — "How do you know, that the 'weird sisters,' in revenge, may not meet us on our way."

"I defy both witch and goblin," said Frances; "but your friends the gipsies may be more formidable."

"Yes, pray let me recommend you not to linger here any longer," said Gerard; "especially as I cannot indulge myself in accompanying you; — for I am afraid our paths lie quite

in an opposite direction. — I have a mile farther to go."

Gerard reluctantly said, "Farewell!" and the ladies rose to pursue their way.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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